
PART ONE

Truth and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Allegory of the Cave in Plato's *Republic*

I would like to call your attention to Hammerschmidt, *Whitehead's Philosophy of Time* (King's Crown Press). This very solid work contains a great deal that is new for me, but I don't know Whitehead very well. A new booklet, "Plato's Theory of Truth" by Heidegger, has appeared. Strauss¹ says it is the most brazen thing he has run into.

There is nothing new to report about us. George is doing quite well in school. I am not making progress in any respect and am often rather downcast.

All the best to you and your dear wife

Your
Alfred Schutz

1. Probably Leo Strauss of the New School.

Chapter One

The Four Stages of the Happening of Truth

§10. Interpretive procedure and the structure of the allegory of the cave

Our answer to the question of the essence of truth had to pass through a decision. We cannot, as it were, think up the essence of truth in an indifferent rumination. Instead, what is at issue is the confrontation in history with the tradition of two fundamental conceptions of the essence of truth, both of which emerged among the Greeks: truth as unconcealment or truth as correctness. The *originary* conception as unconcealment gave way.

Here we cannot decide without further ado whether it was the inner superiority of the latter conception (correctness) that gave it the upper hand over the originary concept, or whether it was a mere inner *failure* that led to the predominance of the conception of truth as *correctness*. We must begin *at the point* where the two conceptions are still engaged in *struggle*.

Plato's philosophy is nothing but the struggle between these two conceptions of truth. The outcome of this struggle determined the spiritual history of the millennia to come. This struggle is found in Plato in *every* dialogue, but in its highest form it is found in the *allegory of the cave*.

The fact that we put the allegory of the cave into *this* context, that we see the struggle between the conceptions of truth in the story that the allegory tells, indicates a quite definite conception. The interpretation of the myth of the cave leads into the heart of Platonic philosophy.¹

The story of the cave in Plato's Republic is found in book VII, 514a–517b. We cite the text of the Platonic dialogue by the edition of Henricus Stepha-

1. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 5 December 1933, reproduced from the lecture transcript of Wilhelm Hallwachs. Cf. note 4, below.}

nus, 3 vols. (Paris, 1578), whose page numbers, and usually also the five subsections a–e, are printed in the margin of modern editions.²

We divide the text into *four sections*—and this means that we divide the whole story into *four stages*.

I. Stage 514a–515c.

The situation of the human being in the subterranean cave.

II. Stage 515c–e.

The liberation of the human being within the cave.

III. Stage 515e–516c.

The authentic human liberation into the light.

IV. Stage 516c–517b.

The look back and the attempt to return to the Dasein of the cave.

We proceed in such a way that we will elucidate each stage *on its own*, while attending from the start to the fact that the individual stages on their own are not what is essential, but rather what lies between them: the *transitions* from one to the next. This means that what is decisive is the whole course of the happening; our own Dasein should participate in completing this course, and should thus undergo movement itself. When, for instance, the first stage has been elucidated, we may not set it aside as something over and done with; we must take it along with us into the transition and the subsequent transitions.

At first I will always supply the translation of the text of the whole section, and then the interpretation will follow. It would be more convenient to refer you to the text or to one of the usual translations. But this is ruled out by the very fact that every translation is an *interpretation*.

The μῦθος is presented in such a way that Socrates tells the story of the cave to Glaucon, with whom he is conversing.^{3,4}

2. {The basis for the text here is Heidegger's personal copy of *Platonis Opera*, ed. Ioannes Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1899 sqq.), vol. 4.}

3. Cf. for what follows Winter Semester 1931–1932.

4. {Martin Heidegger's handwritten text for the lecture course of Winter Semester 1933–1934 ends here. For the main part of the course—i.e., the interpretation of the allegory of the cave and the *Theaetetus*—no new text was prepared. According to Heidegger's note above, the lectures that follow were delivered on the basis of the handwritten text of the lecture of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932. (See Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (GA 34), ed. Hermann Mörchlen. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988.) [English translation: *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and "Theaetetus,"* trans. Ted Sadler (London and New York: Continuum, 2002); this edition includes the German pagination.] Due to both textual and conceptual deviations from the text of 1931–1932, the following text of the lecture course of 1933–1934 is reproduced from the transcription by Wilhelm Hallwachs, which Heidegger preserved among his records. For more details, see the editor's afterword at the back of this volume.)

A. The first stage (514a-515c)

§11. The situation of the human being
in the subterranean cave

SOCRATES: Make an image for yourself of human beings in an underground, cave-like dwelling. Upwards, toward the daylight, it has an entrance that extends along the length of the whole cave. In this dwelling, human beings have been chained since childhood by the legs and neck. Hence, they remain in the same position and look only at what is *in front of* them {as we would say: what is present at hand before them}. {They can neither leave their place nor turn their heads.} They are unable to move their heads around because of the chains. But light {brightness} comes to them from behind, from a fire that burns far above. But between the fire and the prisoners {behind their backs} there runs a road along which, imagine, a little wall has been built, like the partitions that entertainers set up in front of an audience and over which they show their tricks.

GLAUCON: I see {I represent that to myself}.

SOCRATES: Now see, along this little wall, human beings carrying all sorts of implements that poke up over it: statues and other sculptures made of stone and wood, as well as all sorts of equipment designed by human beings. Some of the people carrying these things are talking, as is natural, and the others keep silent.

GLAUCON: You are introducing an odd image there, and odd prisoners.

SOCRATES: They are human beings like us. For is it your opinion that such creatures would see anything of themselves or others than the shadows that the firelight behind them casts upon the cave wall facing them?

GLAUCON: How else, if they are compelled lifelong to hold their heads immobile?

SOCRATES: But what about the equipment being carried by? Don't they see the very same thing, namely, its shadows?

GLAUCON: What else?

SOCRATES: If they were in a position to discuss with one another what they have seen, don't you believe that they would consider what they see to be actual beings?

GLAUCON: Necessarily!

SOCRATES: But what if the dungeon had a echo from the facing wall? Do you believe that whenever one of those passing behind them spoke, they would take anything but the passing shadows to be what was speaking?

GLAUCON: No, by Zeus!

SOCRATES: Therefore such people {these prisoners in the cave} would consider nothing else to be the unconcealed than the shadows of fabricated things.

GLAUCON: Absolutely!

The *first section* depicts the condition of human beings in the underground cave, which has its way out above, toward the daylight that nevertheless does not shine in. In the cave there are human beings chained by the legs and neck; they are forced to look straight ahead at the wall of the cave that faces them. Behind them burns a fire that casts a light. Between the fire and the prisoners there is a passageway behind a little wall; objects—implements and equipment—are carried back and forth along this passageway. Sometimes the carriers keep silent, sometimes they talk.

If there were an echo in the cave, then the prisoners would attribute the sounds of the words to the human beings they saw on the wall. This is the question: how does the presentation of this first stage end? With an explicit indication that what is at stake here is ἀλήθεια in the sense of the unconcealed. Socrates says that these prisoners would take nothing other than *shadows* of things to be the *unconcealed*. So the question is how these human beings relate and behave toward the ἀληθές, the unconcealed.

As strange as the condition of these human beings is, and as odd as the setting is, these human beings are nevertheless related to τὸ ἀληθές, to the unconcealed itself: human beings from childhood on, by their nature, are set forth into the unconcealed, no matter how strange their condition may be. Human beings are set forth in advance into the unconcealed, that is, into a connection to the things πρὸς τὸ πρόσθεν [facing what is in front of them]. *To be human* means to stand in the unconcealed and relate to it.

But precisely because of this, the question will arise: *what* is unconcealed to human beings in this condition? It is simply what they immediately encounter, what faces them. These are the shadows that the people behind them cast against the wall in the glow of the fire.

§12. What is unconcealed in the cave

This presentation is ambiguous and calls for more precision. The prisoners see the shadows, to be sure, but they do not see them *as* shadows. What *they* see, *we* call mere shadows. They themselves are not in a position to call what shows up on the wall in front of them shadows. For this, they would have to know about the fire and about the light that it casts. Yet the prisoners cannot know anything about all this.

Although *we* can ask what is unconcealed, this is a question that the prisoners have no occasion to ask. They have to take the shadows as beings themselves. They have not noticed that the light is behind them and comes from behind their backs. Here we must distinguish between *fire* and *light*, *lux* and *lumen*, the source of light and brightness (like door and doorjamb). We use the expression “light” in a double sense (source of light and brightness).

The people there have no relation to the fire and the light, so they are unable to tell bright from dark. What they see is not a *semblance of something else*, but *beings themselves*, τὰ ὄντα = that which is. Automatically, so to speak, the prisoners take what is played out in front of them as that which is.

If they could discuss among themselves, διαλέγεσθαι, what is given to them and encountered by them, that is, if they could talk about a thing among themselves . . . (It would be misguided to want to think here about dialectic and dialogue. *Plato's dialectic* has its roots here, insofar as beings are not communicated, but instead, what one encounters is first addressed as a being.—Connection between the *Being* of things and the *discourse* of language.) So if they could express themselves, they would address it without further ado as *what is*. Man is such that he *relates* to the *unconcealed* as something that is. We designate this relation of man to something that is as the *comportment* on the basis of which, and within which, man comports himself toward beings and stands in relation to them, as *Being* toward something that is. Beings as revealed.

We want to clarify the concept of *relationship*. An *animal* that comports itself thus and so. The animal cannot *comport* itself toward something that is, otherwise it would have to be able to speak. (Dog in relation to the bone!) We will encounter the fundamental relationship between animal and man again as we proceed.

These people really do not even have an experience of themselves and of the others. They see, at most, their own shadows, without recognizing them as such; they are completely given over to what is given. They have no relationship to themselves.

The unconcealed is not given to them as unconcealed. They are not familiar with the difference between the concealed and the unconcealed. They are completely gone, they are all eyes and all ears for what they are encountering.

This is quite a remarkable situation these people are in. Glaucon calls it ἄτοπον, a situation I don't know how to place anywhere, I have no *place* for it within what I am familiar with.

This situation is the everyday situation of man; it is not an exception but the situation of man in everydayness, insofar as he is given over to idle talk, to the customary, what lies closest at hand, the every-

day, business as usual. Man in everydayness loses himself, forgets himself in the press of things.

Now, what is listed in this first characterization? The situation: *shadows; people in chains; fire and light*, a light that burns behind them; *people who have no relationship to this; people who do not understand the unconcealed*.

All these moments seem at first to be accidental elements in the depiction of this remarkable situation; but they are all connected. It is precisely this inner connection that constitutes what we will exhibit as the essence of truth.

If we restrict ourselves completely to the first stage, we must participate in all of this, completely caught up in what is playing itself out on the wall in front of us. Even there, and already there, what we know as ἀλήθεια, unconcealment, reigns. So we are not talking about truth as correctness, but as unconcealment.

B. The second stage (515c–515e5)

§13. A “liberation” of the human being within the cave

In our previous lecture,⁵ we attempted to interpret more precisely the first stage of the people in the cave by bringing out the individual moments more precisely. We closed with a reference to the last sentence, which makes it clear that what is at stake is the ἀλήθεις, the unconcealed.

The unconcealed here is definitely and positively stated: it is not *some arbitrary* unconcealed but rather *the* unconcealed, such that human beings in *every circumstance* are *related* to the unconcealed and in the broadest sense stand in truth (and in untruth). To be human and to exist as human means, in the end: to stand in truth.

So then what is, in this circumstance, the unconcealed, the true? What is the unconcealed to *them*, then? The shadows! But they do not experience them *as* shadows. A precondition for that would be telling the difference between light and dark. That is impossible for them. The light and the source of light are at their backs. But they cannot turn themselves around. Accordingly, this arrangement of the illumination in the cave as a whole is essential to the status of the human beings, and so is their being chained.

The people address the unconcealed as *beings*. The unconcealed is what is. The people are not just in the unconcealed, they are in it through διαλέγεσθαι—first, in the sense of talking things through

5. {In the session of 5 December 1933. The recapitulation from the beginning of the session of 7 December 1933 has been inserted by the editor here.}

with one another. Second, this means the manner of talking and asserting in which beings are grasped in their Being: dialectic.

This is only a crude outline. We saw in the explication of the condition of the people in the cave that they are not in a position to experience themselves and others as beings; instead, they can experience only the shadows that they themselves cast. Therefore, they have in no way *reached* the distinction of light and dark and are entirely caught up in what the senses have to offer. Their condition is ἄτοπον, entirely exceptional, impossible to place. But precisely this condition is the *everyday* condition of human beings.

As we said before, we should not simply line the stages up one after another; instead, we must always carry forward with us what has been said about the previous stage. The first stage described the situation. The second stage must begin with a story, because it is about a story (a happening). *What happens?*

SOCRATES: NOW envision what it would mean for someone to be released {λύσις} from the chains and have his lack of discernment healed, and consider what must necessarily and essentially occur as a consequence {οἷα τις ἂν εἴη φύσει},⁶ if the following should happen: one of them is unchained and compelled suddenly to stand up, to turn his neck around, to go and to gaze upon the light. But he could do all this only in pain, and, owing to the blaze of the fire, he would be unable to look at those things whose shadows he saw previously. Assuming that all of this were to happen to the prisoner, what do you believe he would say if someone were to claim that previously he had seen empty nothings, but now he was nearer to beings and turned toward what is *more* a being so that he saw more correctly? And if someone were to show him each of the things being carried past {which he would now see directly} and compelled him to say what each one was, don't you believe that he wouldn't know how to begin, and would hold that what he had seen before was more unconcealed than what was now being shown to him?

GLAUCON: Absolutely!

SOCRATES: And surely if someone required him to look, not just at the things but now at the *light itself*, then wouldn't his eyes hurt, and wouldn't he turn away and flee back to what he had the capacity to see; and wouldn't he be of the opinion that these {namely, the shad-

6. [A conventional translation would be: "what would naturally be."] [Textual variant adopted by Heidegger from Schleiermacher's edition of Plato, 3rd edition (Berlin, 1855-1862). Cf. the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931-1932 (GA 34), p. 30 n. 1: "thus I read 515c5 with Schleiermacher."]

ows} were in fact clearer, more visible, than what one had just now wanted to show him?

GLAUCON: That's how it is!

We see that in the second stage a story begins. History begins.⁷ Something happens. The interpretation must now clarify what is happening here and what, through the happening, is being said to us about the essence of truth.

The chains by which these prisoners are bound by leg and neck are taken off. The question needs to be asked: What does this happening bring with it (οἷα τις ἂν εἶη φύσει)? What must now happen by an essential necessity? Not some arbitrary event, but a happening that touches the *essence of human beings*.

This is the question: what is the aim of the removal of the chains as a happening? The happening makes it evident, { . . . }⁸ ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ τότε [he would hold that what (he had seen) before . . .]. Someone unchained in this way would have to hold that the ἀληθές he had previously seen was more unconcealed than what he was looking at now, namely the things that he formerly had behind him and which he now would see in front of him.

What is at issue again is the ἀληθές, but now in an entirely different sense: ἀληθέστερα (the comparative) = truer, more unconcealed. Something is happening now with unconcealment. Unconcealment starts to *move*, so to speak.

In the first stage, the following are connected with unconcealment: chains, light, Being. But now that this unconcealment starts to move, we get a first sense of *what* the relationship is between being enchained and light, and between light and unconcealment.⁹

§14. Expanded conception of unconcealment in the failure of the first attempt at liberation

What is most striking is the talk of unconcealment in the comparative. Unconcealment can be unconcealment to a greater or lesser degree. This does not mean a numerical difference in unconcealment—not shadows anymore, but *something else that is unconcealed*. The mode of unconcealment has clearly changed. What the prisoner saw before

7. [*Geschichte* means either “story” or “history.” Throughout his interpretation of the allegory of the cave, Heidegger seems to trade on this ambiguity.]

8. {One word illegible here.}

9. {W. Hallwachs's note: “The inner relation of the enchained and the fact that they are also interwoven??”}

and what he is looking at now—that is, the shadows and the things that used to be behind him—now move apart. Each has the fundamental property of being accessible, each is unconcealed.

Now they move apart; and in fact, now each is judged differently, as it is established that what is shown now *is* more, *μᾶλλον ὄντα*. Not only the true and unconcealed has degrees and levels, but so do beings. Something can be *in Being* to a greater or lesser degree; even man can be in Being to a greater or lesser degree.

The *increase* of unconcealment itself is perhaps just a consequence of a quite definite *nearness* of man to beings, a nearness that depends on the human way of Being in each case.

One point is now clear: truth and Being-true are not some indifferent, universal thing, not something immutable that remains the same for everyone. And not everyone has the same right to every truth, nor the same strength for it. Every truth has its time. Particular truths, particular human beings find their own time at particular times. It won't do to talk to everyone about everything. Truth has its degree, its rank, and its nobility—in each case according to the way in which man himself is worthy of standing near or distant from beings.

The nearness or distance changes the unconcealed, in a certain sense. The second point is an initial insight into the relation between the two forms of truth, *unconcealment* and *correctness*. In Plato, these two forms collided.

The one who is turned toward what *is more of a being*, toward what *is* more than something else, sees *more correctly*, *ὀρθότερον*. Correctness comes up in connection with unconcealment. The *correctness* of seeing and looking is based on the *bestowal* and *nearness* of Being in each case, on the way in which beings are revealed and unconcealed. *Truth as correctness is impossible without truth as unconcealment.*

When one has grasped this, one can only wonder how it was possible to attach the concept of truth exclusively to correctness or validity. In order for all discourse and defining to *direct* themselves toward something, beings must be unconcealed *in advance*. The concept of correctness already brings unconcealment with it.

The question of rank order is thereby already decided. The more originary and higher concept is truth as unconcealment. Truth as correctness is *grounded* upon it. Yet there are differences of opinion about what has more truth or Being.

We must ask: how does the unchained prisoner determine what he prefers if he turns back toward the shadows, and if he looks upon the shadows as the unconcealed—if, turned toward the shadows, he has calmly accustomed himself to that place, so that his eyes are no longer in pain from the blazing glow of the fire? He goes along with what he *likes*, what makes no *trouble* for him, what takes care of itself; he goes

along with what demands no effort, with business as usual. The standard for his preference is the preservation of untroubled immunity to every demand, to every necessity. But now, what would provoke him to turn to the things themselves? After all, he is making quite an amazing effort to chase after the shadows.

So it is not enough just to take away the chains; he has to be turned around. The liberated man *resists*, because this liberation—that is, this removal of the chains—is supposed to happen *suddenly*. He is not cured when the chains are suddenly removed. He is not yet able to recognize what he used to see as shadows.

Instead of shadowy images, he is now placed before the light (the blazing glow) of things. He has no other possibility for comparison. On the one side he has the comfortable view of the shadows, on the other, the painful blaze. He will make an effort to escape his confusion and return to his peaceful condition.

Taking away the chains is *not an actual liberation*, it is only an external liberation. It does not take hold of the man in his *own Being*. It does not change his inner condition, his will. His will is a not-willing. He shrinks back and shrinks away from every demand. So he is also far from understanding that in each case, man *is* only as much as he has the strength to demand of himself.

The second stage, which looks like a liberation, remains a failure. We experience what is being said about the essence of truth by means of the second stage—over and above the first: now it is clear that human liberation, and the turn toward beings and the Being of things, cannot be carried out as long as the man does not know about the unconcealed *as* unconcealed. He is unable to make the *distinction*, for he has no insight into unconcealment: shadows, things, self, light, Being and beings.

How must we think the essential connection between *the Being-free of humans* and their *relationship to light, concealment, and unconcealment* if we want to grasp the *inner essential structure of truth* as such?

C. The third stage (515e5–516e2)

§15. The authentic liberation of the human being to the originary light¹⁰

In the last session we interpreted the second stage and by doing so we experienced that through the attempt at a liberation, two things were distinguished for the first time: what was previously seen, what we call the shadows, and what is now shown. At the same time, this distinction opens up a *difference* in kind whereby the things themselves

10. For the second stage was already a liberation to the light—but not really.

and the fire in the cave are addressed as the *truer*, as the *more revealed*, as what *is* more.

In turning toward what *is* more, looking and asserting must also be formed *more correctly*. This is the first passage where we encounter the *doubling of the concept of truth*. At the same time, this passage shows us that *truth as correctness is grounded upon truth as unconcealment*.

It might now be assumed that the liberated prisoner willingly turns toward the truer Being; however, this is absolutely not the case. On the contrary, we experience that the man who has been rid of his chains wants to go *back* to the shadows, because he takes them for what is truer. We saw that the absence of all compulsion, of all pain, was decisive for him; what he saw previously (the shadows) is considered more comfortable.

Why does it come to this? The liberation happens suddenly. It brings confusion with it because of the brightness and the glare of the light. It is obvious that such a *turning around* requires a slow *rehabilitation* and that before the latter is embarked upon, one cannot speak of an *authentic* liberation. This attempt at liberation as merely removing the chains will not be taken up again in the third stage.

SOCRATES: But if someone were now to drag him {the one rid of his chains} by force along the rough, steep ascent from the cave and not let go of him until he had pulled him out into the light of the sun, wouldn't the one who was dragged feel pain and resist, and as soon as he came into the brightness, his eyes full of the glare, wouldn't he also be unable to see even one of the things that he was now being told were the unconcealed?

GLAUCON: No, at least not immediately.

SOCRATES: In my opinion, it would require a habituation for him to see what is above. And surely at first he would most easily be able to look at shadows, and next, in water, the mirrored reflections of human beings and other things, and only later {the things} themselves. And among these {the things themselves and no longer the shadows and reflections}, he will more easily observe at night those found in the heavens and firmament itself, looking into the brightness of the stars and moon. He will be able to look at them more easily than he would look by day at the sun and its light.

GLAUCON: Certainly!

SOCRATES: So, finally, in my opinion, he will be able to gaze not just at the reflection of the sun in water and elsewhere but at the sun itself as itself, in its proper place, and observe how it is.

GLAUCON: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: And next he will come to the conclusion about it {the sun} that it is what bestows the seasons and governs the years and every-

thing that has a visible place and that it is also the ground for everything that they {in the cave} saw in a certain way {and so is also the ground for the possibility of the shadows in the cave}.

GLAUCON: Obviously, he would arrive at this conclusion after the other {one after the other}. {At the same time, this rehabilitation distinguishes the different regions.}

SOCRATES: What then, if he were to remember the first dwelling, and the wisdom of that place, and those who were prisoners with him back then? Don't you believe that he would count himself lucky for the reversal that happened to him, but pity those others?

GLAUCON: Very much so!

SOCRATES: And what if back then {in the cave} they had among themselves agreed on honors, praise, and awards for the one who sees the things passing by the most sharply and best keeps in mind what tends to pass by before and after and at the same time, and who thus is most ready to predict what will come within this realm of shadows? Do you believe that he would long for such {honors} and that he would envy those who stand in renown and power among the people down there? Or wouldn't he much prefer to endure what Homer speaks of, namely "to serve some other impoverished man for hire,"¹¹ and wouldn't he prefer to take anything upon himself rather than to take these {the shadows} as the true, the unconcealed, and to live like that {like the prisoners}?

GLAUCON: In my opinion, yes. He would rather suffer anything else than live in this way.

You can already see roughly that the third stage brings about an authentic liberation.

In the third stage, a *second* attempt at liberation occurs in which the one rid of his chains is *dragged* out, *hauled* out of the cave into the *daylight*, where it becomes possible to experience particular appearances, shadows, mirror images in water, and so forth, and finally daylight and the *sun*.

In the third stage we see the *core* of the whole story, because we grasp the connections: the connection between shadow and light, concealment in shadow and unconcealment in light; all of this, in turn, in connection with the opposition between *enchained* and *liberated*. The question in the third stage is how, in this story, the essence of truth gets clarified.

11. {*Odyssey* XI, ll. 489-90.}

§16. Liberation and unconcealment. Four questions about their connection

We already saw from the rudimentary content of this stage that this liberation no longer consists in the *negative*, but in climbing up to the light of day, and thus also in *passing beyond* artificial light, the fire in the cave. But here, too, the aim is truth: τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα ἀληθῆ,¹² what is addressed *now* in this liberation as unconcealment.

We were observing the *situation of the human being*, whether in chains or freed. Each situation, each stage, has its *own* kind of unconcealment and truth. *The kind and manner of truth depends on the kind and manner of the human being.* This is not to say that truth is *subjective*, that it depends on arbitrary human preference. That is not the case at all.

1. The transition to what is now unconcealed happens βίᾱ [by force]. The one found in the cave must be dragged out. The *liberation is violent*. It involves acts of violence, and thus a *resistance* on the part of the man; he does not want to leave his old situation at all. The climb is onerous, along a rough path. Liberation demands effort. Here, what is distinctive about *Greek Dasein* comes to light.

The Dasein of the Greeks is not as most prep-school teachers present it—not lying on one’s back in the sun, not golden blessedness and cheer, but a great, immense *struggle* with the most immense and darkest powers, a struggle that is apparent in Aeschylus’ tragedies. The rough path is the last remembrance of this struggle. Liberation is no walk in the park.

2. Neither undoing the chains nor merely coming out of the cave is enough for the liberation to reach its goal and succeed. The *authentic* happening of the liberation first begins *outside* the cave by way of the man’s *rehabilitation*, συνήθεια—a slow, steady rehabilitating, in which he slowly grows familiar with what is out there; this means with the *brightness* out there, with the light, not so much with the particular things.

The reeducation takes this direction first: the man’s gaze (i.e. his comportment) is at first guided toward what, outside the cave, has a certain kinship with what was in the cave. So at first he does not understand the light and the sun, but his eyes are drawn to the shadows, to the reflections. This is why he also sees best at night, by the stars and moon. At first he gets used to dim light.

3. Only once his gaze has slowly been rehabilitated do his eyes get used to the daylight and to *what* is in the daylight, and *finally* to

12. [Reading ἀληθῆ for ἀλήθεια. See German p. 167, below, and *Republic* 516a3.]

the *source* of light, the *sun*, which is not only *light* but also rules over *time*, as the cause of time. Then as now, time was measured by the sun. The sun says what time it is; time is bound to it.

Time and all that shows itself depends on the sun and its light. The sun is the ground of Being and of all that man encounters there, even of every worn-out {?}¹³ and manmade fire, and thus even the fire in the cave. All this first becomes intelligible by virtue of the sun. The sun itself is *the ground of all Being*.

4. The *authentic* liberation demands not only violence but *endurance*, a long *courage* that is sufficient to run through the stages in all their heights, a courage that can endure setbacks. Only this intimate acquaintance with the stages in their necessary order can ensure success.

When we get clear on the whole situation and the whole happening, according to this interpretation, everything seems to be transparent and clear. Only one difficulty remains: what is this whole happening supposed to mean? After all, the whole thing is an allegory.

The starting point is precisely a sensory image of the life of human beings as they live *outside* the cave. But what does the life of human beings outside the cave signify?

An interpretation can be found in Plato himself (517b ff.): the cave is the picture of human beings as living on earth under the vault of heaven. We are, in a way, in a cave. The fire in this cave is the sun. The shadows are the things we deal with. But what does the stage *outside* the cave depict? This “outside” means the sojourn of man in the place *above* the vault of heaven (ὑπερουράνιος τόπος) [*Phaedrus* 247c], that is, the place of the *idea*. The sun is nothing other than the *highest* of the ideas, the *idea of the good*.

Now, we do not yet know *what an idea is*. The fire in the cave is the sun, its shining is the light of the sun, the shadows are what we see every day. We are, in a way, prisoners, inasmuch as we are bound to the self-evident, to business as usual.

What do we encounter if we exit the cave? Can we still get out of the cave? What does that mean?

We saw that what is being discussed in the third stage is rehabilitation to the light. That is the authentic process of liberation, whereby the things outside become visible in the right way. Here too, a connection between light and freedom, unconcealment and Being is apparent—an obscure connection, to begin with.

13. [*Abgängig*: the editor has marked this reading as uncertain. It is possibly a misreading of *abhängig*, “dependent.”]

A new world emerges: the world of the ideas, which is represented by the heaven above heaven. We are faced with *four questions*:

1. What is the connection between idea and light?
2. What is the connection between light and freedom?
3. What is the connection between freedom and beings?
4. What is the essence of truth as unconcealment that now comes to light from these three connections?

For the moment I will leave aside the idea of the good. Plato already treated it in detail earlier, in book VI. We will come back to the question of the connection between the good and the idea only at the end of the story, in the context of the whole. Only on that basis will we be able to enter into the confrontation with the Platonic conception that determined the next two millennia.

§17. On the concept of the idea

- a) Preliminary remark on the significance of the doctrine of the ideas in the history of spirit¹⁴

What is the connection between idea and light? What does idea mean?

With this question, we touch upon a fundamental element—indeed, upon the *fundamental constitution*—of our Western historical Dasein. With the help of what Plato's doctrine of the ideas prepared, the Christian concept of God was conceived. This became the standard for the next millennia, for what is genuinely real and unreal. The doctrine of the ideas became the standard for the conception of the Being of things in general.

Secondly, at the beginning of modernity, Plato's doctrine of the ideas developed and helped to form the modern concept of reason and of rational natural science. Even Romanticism depends on the reign of the idea.

Rationalism and the idea of God come together in the highest completion of Western thinking, in Hegelian philosophy. It is no accident that *Hegel* himself identified himself as the one who had completed Western philosophy, to the extent that it is the Greek world reconstructed in a Christian way.

From here, there developed in the nineteenth century: 1. *Marxism's* doctrine of ideologies, which can be understood only on the basis of Hegel; 2. the new interpretation of Christianity through *Kierkegaard*.

14. {On this point, cf. the lecture of the same name of Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), appendices 3 and 4, pp. 324–25.}

These ideas, blended and made innocuous, produced the characteristic picture of cultural philistinism that finally drove *Nietzsche* to despair.

Nietzsche saw the coming struggle in advance. *Nietzsche* struggles on three fronts: a) with *humanism*; b) with a *baseless Christianity*; c) with the *Enlightenment*. In keeping with the urgency of the circumstances, he drew his weapons from these three armories themselves.

Since then, there has been no further clear, originary, spiritual-historical position or attitude left for human beings. Only mishmash! Human beings today are no longer able to see and to experience their own position on the earth. They will once again be able to do so from the moment that they experience the fundamental condition for doing so, namely, the necessity of coming to a *decision* in the face of the essential powers of humanity in general, *Dasein* itself, in so far as the powers of humanity press upon them and compel them to a choice.

This tremendous moment into which National Socialism is being driven today is the coming to be of a *new spirit of the entire earth*. In this perspective, it must become plain what it means to get clear about this and about much else.

The doctrine of the ideas contains living powers that still dominate us even today, even if they are entirely flat and unrecognizable. We are asking ourselves systematically about the connections from which something like the idea of the doctrine of the ideas grew.

b) The fundamental orientation of knowledge toward “seeing”
and what is seen

When we look at our circumstances with an eye to this history, we might say: inasmuch as our everyday circumstances are depicted by the condition of the human beings in the cave, we human beings are given over to the everyday—by that which offers itself to us, by the shadows on the wall. What all this means is that, in carrying on in this way, we are not with genuine beings and not in genuine truth.

There is out beyond this something else, which is depicted by the daylight—or to speak without images: *the idea*. The word “idea” comes from ἰδέα (εἰδεῖν), with the root *vid-*, in Latin *videre*, to see. ἰδέα means: what *is seen in seeing*.

The question is simply this: what is it that is seen in seeing, what is it that we see in seeing? In other words, what does “seeing” mean?

If we proceed from the natural concept of seeing, seeing means a *behavior*, the fact that we *perceive* something with the *eyes*: benches, book, door.—But with what do we see, really? If we look more closely into whether we in fact see the book with our eyes, do we see it with our eyes? What do we see with them?

This becomes plain if we contrast it to what we *hear* with our *ears*. We perceive something, hear noises. We see colors, brightness, illumination, bright-dark. But we don't just see colors, but rather the whole shape, the spatial form. But things already get difficult here, for the spatial shape is not given in seeing alone. I can also feel it. Movement is not just given through seeing. I can also hear it: for example, a car.

The perception of spatial shape is no longer limited to *one* sense organ. With the eyes, we perceive only color and illumination. We call perception with the eyes or with the senses in general *sensation*. Seeing colors as sensation! But if we see this book, are we sensing it? No! We sense only the particular coloration. There is no sensation of the book cover. We do not see the book at all; at most we see a specific color, but never the book.

And nevertheless we say: I see the book! I see and I do not see. Thus the expression and term "seeing" is *ambiguous*.

The question is whether seeing with the eye is the originary seeing or whether seeing with the eye is a specific mode of seeing, whether something like the eye is integrated into the process of seeing. Why should the organ for seeing be the eye in particular?

The organic composition of the sense organs is, taken purely *metaphysically, accidental*. Any other apparatus would alter nothing in seeing. The organ as *organ* is not essential; rather, what is essential is the behavior into which the organ is integrated. The eye does not see at all. It is just a *passageway*, not an endpoint; it is not the seer's own seeing. The eye can never see a book.

From this we see that the expression "seeing" has a remarkable breadth that, we must now suspect, is attached to words in the Greek world—to the meaning and the concept of ἰδέα.

Our designation for cognition in general and for *theoretical* scientific cognition is also drawn from this connection to what is seen. "Theoretical" comes from θεωρεῖν, which means nothing other than looking, seeing. *Knowing is oriented to the fundamental phenomenon of the idea and of what is seen.*

The connection between *idea* and *light* is no accidental one; rather, light is a condition for the possibility of experiencing what is visible, whether living or not. On what paths and in what phases did the natural concept of seeing achieve this expansion, such that what is seen means that which, as *idea*, constitutes *genuine Being* and *reality*?

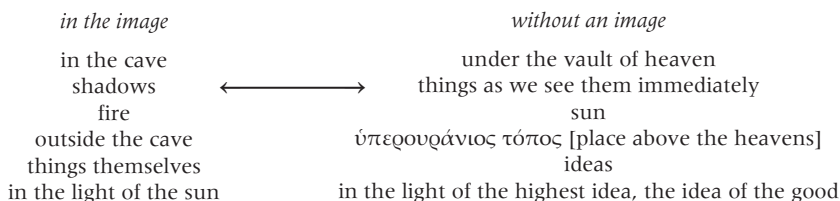
§18. Idea and light

a) On the idea in the context of Platonic thought.

The priority of seeing and its broader concept¹⁵

We attempted to decide how to ground the determination of the essence of truth through a confrontation with Platonic philosophy, to begin with, because it is in this philosophy that the concepts of truth, having come to life, are set forth in such a way that the one—the concept of correctness—gains the upper hand, while the other—the concept of unconcealment—moves into the background.

We have interpreted what really happens *inside* the cave and the liberation of the man *from* the cave. We attempted to extract the core content. In this attempt, we ran up against the need to interpret the whole allegory *in advance*. Plato shows what this allegory exhibits as a *sensory image of human Dasein*.



Now, what does Plato mean by the ὑπερουράνιος τόπος [place above the heavens]? What does the “idea” mean, and what does the idea of the good mean? What we call ideas develop for the first time in the context of Platonic thought. The discovery of the idea is to be made understandable on the basis of the inner context of Plato’s way of posing questions.

The entire spiritual Dasein of the West is determined to this day by this doctrine of ideas. Even the concept of God arises from the idea, even natural science is oriented toward it. Christian and rationalist thought are combined in *Hegel*. Hegel, in turn, is the foundation for currents of thought and worldviews, above all for *Marxism*. If there had been no doctrine of ideas, there would be no Marxism. So Marxism cannot be defeated once and for all unless we first confront the doctrine of ideas and its two-millennia-long history.

For the moment, we want to restrict ourselves to the allegory of the cave. What does the word “idea” mean for Plato—and thus for the entire history of the spirit? What connection is there between the idea

15. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 19 December 1933.}

and what is presented in the image as the sun, fire, and light? What does light mean? What is the connection between idea and light?

Ἰδέα (ἰδεῖν, to see) = what is seen, what is perceived in seeing. Now, what does “seeing” mean here? Seeing as perceiving with the help of the eyes. We see the book, so we say. But if we look more precisely at what we actually see with the eyes, distinguishing it from what we hear from the ears, we reach the conclusion that with the eyes, we see things such as color, brightness, and something shiny.

But we also say: we see that something is moving. But we hear this too. For example, we hear that a car is getting closer or farther away. But the perception of things in motion is not restricted to the senses of hearing and seeing. I can also feel it. The proper domain for visual perception is color, brightness, clarity. So we really cannot say: we see the book. And the dog does not “see” the book either, nor can it ever see it; it sees something colored.

If we now say, despite all this, that we see the book, then we are using a concept that is *broader* than seeing as sensory perception. This broader concept becomes definitive for ἰδεῖν and ἰδέα. So, in the strict sense, I cannot see the book.

b) The seeing of what-Being. Idea and Being:
presencing—self-presence in the view

But we can say: I see *in* this given, tangible, audible, visible, graspable thing that it is a book. I see this *in* it. What is given offers me *insight*, a *look at* a book. So that *as which* something offers itself (as chalk, as book, as lamp) is that within which the relevant thing presents itself, that is, exhibits its *self-presence*.

The Greeks call the presentness of a thing *Presence*. Presentness is equivalent to *Being* for them. οὐσία = presence, that as which a thing is presencing; that which is its essence, or in short, its Being; that as which a thing offers itself, what a thing looks like = εἶδος. ἰδέα is just another form of the word εἶδος. ἰδεῖν: the seeing of a thing. ἰδέα: the appearance, the look that it offers; that in which something shows itself *as it is*; what something looks like, the appearance of something.

For the Greeks, the *idea* is nothing other than *Being*, what something is: the Being that pertains to it.

If we look more closely, supposing that our comprehension were limited to the realm of what the things give us—color, brightness, and the like—if we had only all these as givens, then we would have no *world* at all.

I can identify this thing in front of me as a book only insofar as I know and understand in advance what a book is. If we did not have the *understanding*, the possibility of seeing this book *as* a book could never come up. But instead there is a distinctive *advance knowledge of things* on

the basis of which the particular, factual things in each case are given to us in their Being-such-and-such, and can become accessible.

In the first stage, the prisoners see only shadows, because they are in chains and are incapable of knowing anything about fire and light, because they are given over only to the shadows, which are the only things they accept as the given. We, in everyday Dasein, are given over to the *things*, we comport ourselves toward them in the opinion that we see a thing and just need to open our eyes. In this we know nothing about the fact that at bottom, in experiencing a thing we must already know about the essence of things *in advance*.

c) The essence of light and brightness:
transparency that is perceived and seen in advance

The prisoner in the cave must be freed and led out, he must reach a realm in which he sees the *light* (the idea as daylight). The *light* is the *sensory image of the idea*.

What fundamental function do the idea and light have in common? What is the essence of light?

We already indicated earlier [German p. 132] that we must distinguish linguistically between

φῶς: light, brightness, *lumen* and
πῦρ: fire, *source of light, lux*.

Our word “light” has the double meaning of φῶς and πῦρ. φωσφόρος (phosphorus) is a thing that carries a *source of light* with it, an illuminator, a *bearer of brightness*.

What does light mean? What is the essence of light? On what basis can the essence of the *idea* be depicted in a sensory image as *light*?

Our concept of *cognition* is oriented to *seeing* and *light*. Theoretical cognition, theory (θεωρία), is looking, perceiving in the broadest sense. It is no accident that later, in Christian speculative thought (already in Augustine), *God* is conceived as the *lumen*. In distinction from God we have the *natural light of reason* (*lumen naturale*).

So in what does the essence of light consist? Color is the sort of thing that belongs in the domain of sight; but obviously brightness is not something thinglike. We cannot grasp brightness as if it were some thing. Brightness is, as it were, ungraspable—like the nothing, like emptiness.

Nevertheless, for centuries already there have been theories of light (Newton; the particle theory, the wave theory, the electromagnetic theory, etc.). All these theories may be correct as physical theories, and yet they can be untrue and miss the *phenomenon*. They cannot illuminate the *essence* of light. The issue here is not periodic changes of condition, it

is not a question of comprehending the process as one of movement; the issue is *the* clarity and *the* light in which we *human beings* move—the essence of light itself. We can grasp light only if we hold firmly to the phenomenon, tying it to our *natural seeing and looking*.

Even *looking* is not explained either in physiology or in psychology, because looking, in its highest, proper sense, is a *phenomenon* that is not reached at all by any natural science—for example, when one human being looks another in the eye.

Let us see how things stand with brightness and darkness. We see something colored, sparkling, glittering. If we say in addition that we *also* see bright and dark, we do not get at the sense of the matter. We always see bright and dark to begin with. When we wake up from sleep, we never see things, to begin with, but bright and dark. However, bright and dark are not just *also* seen, but are the *condition* for the fact that I see or do not see *things in general*.

Brightness and darkness have a certain *priority*, consisting in the fact that brightness and darkness *make it possible* for something to be seen or not to be seen. From this we can gather that brightness and darkness are always what we already see *in advance*; we gather that we always see things and light together, and in the darkness we no longer see. Light, brightness, darkness are what is seen in advance in all perceiving. Things must first stand in the light in order to be visible.

Now, what does brightness mean? What does the bright really bring about in the human seeing and grasping of things? The [German] word *Helle* [brightness, clarity] comes from *Hallen* [resounding], so originally it does not belong in the domain of the visible, but in the domain of tone, of sound. A tone can be clear or muted. Clarity is not originally a special characteristic of the *visible*, but it was first transferred to the visible in *language*. We speak of a clear, bright day. But this transference is not accidental; it emerged from many insights. Here again, the deep truth of language reveals itself.

If a transference has taken place here, we must ask: what do *clarity* (as a fundamental property of tone) and *light* have in common? The clear tone, that is, the resounding tone, can be intensified into a *shrill* [gellenden] tone. The *nightingale* is what *shrills* through the night. The muted tone is left behind.

The clear and the shrill have the character of the *piercing*. This is the moment that links light and tone: light, too, spreads and penetrates; it *enables the piercing quality of sight*. Light and the clear are the transparent, what one can see through. The *essence of clarity and light* consists in *enabling one to see through*, in being transparent. Chalk is not transparent. Glass and water are transparent.

But clarity, brightness, is transparent in a different sense than glass is. To be transparent, a glass requires light—it still needs light and its

“transparency.” Light and brightness are a *more originary* form of the transparent; they are what *makes it possible* for us to see-through.

Darkness is only a limit case of brightness, that which no longer lets our gaze pass through. A wooden wall is also impenetrable, because it does not have the possibility of letting the gaze pass through. But darkness has the possibility of being penetrated by the gaze.

The character of light is what lets through, the character of darkness is what blocks the way of the gaze. To sum up the character of each: a) light is what is perceived and seen in advance, and b) as such, light is also what lets the gaze and seeing pass through.

On the basis of this *double* characterization it is not hard to clarify how *light* can emerge as the sensory image of the *idea*. ἰδέα = εἶδος, appearance of something, what a thing is, its what-Being, in short: its *Being*. I must already understand (see) *in advance* what a thing is—book, door, window. This understood *essence* (book, door, window) is what lets the gaze pass through in order to see it as a *thing* (book, etc.)—that which must be known in advance in order to let a being be encountered as *this* being.

Accordingly, the *seeing of ideas* does not signify anything fantastic, but rather something *originary*. For to grasp what is simplest and press it into words, to understand the Being and essence of things in advance = *understanding of Being*.

If man did not have this understanding of Being in the ground of his essence, then he could not even relate to beings; he could not say “I” to himself and “you” to another. He could not speak. The essence of language and the sight of the ideas are the same as existing as a human being.

This perceiving of shadows, coming into the light, and perceiving of things, are connected to undoing the chains, to the liberation from the cave. The next question is: what connection is there between *light* and *freedom*, between *idea* and *freedom*?

What is the entire contexture of what we call the essence of truth?

§19. Light and freedom

- a) On the determination of man on the basis of
seeing, hearing, and speaking

The elements that constitute the inner connection in Plato’s story are the following:

1. idea and light;
2. light and freedom;
3. freedom and beings;

4. the question about the connection between all these factors and truth.

We have previously attempted to clarify *idea* according to its essence. The word ἰδέα is related to a fundamental fact about the conception of human beings in Greek Dasein (and therefore in the entire spiritual life of the West, too). In this conception of human beings, visual comprehension, θεωρεῖν (from which “theory” derives) takes on a predominant role—the eye, seeing. Accordingly, *the seen* becomes especially preeminent in the comprehensive conception of the world.

But alongside this, another fact also emerges, even if late—that is, first with *Aristotle*—a fact that rules over Greek Dasein as essentially as ideas and seeing. This is *hearing*. Indeed, Aristotle asks whether hearing might not somehow be the higher sense and, accordingly, whether it might condition the higher comportment of human beings.

In this context, hearing and seeing are not conceived of as confined to mere sense perception; rather, they are taken more broadly, as listening to what has been spoken, hearing the word of the other. *Language* is the fundamental element of the being-with-one-another of human beings. For the Greeks, *discourse* is a defining moment for the essence of human beings. The human being is a ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, that is, the sort of living being that has the capacity for talk, the sort that, insofar as it exists, *speaks out* to others.

This hearing the other, and at the same time, one another, is therefore no merely acoustic phenomenon; rather, it means hearing a summons, lending an ear to a wish, listening to an order, assignment, and so on.

In the same context [*Politics* 1.2], Aristotle also says that the human being is a ζῶον πολιτικόν [usually translated “political animal”]. This phrase was later much abused, as when one translated it as, “The human being is a *social* being.” But this is not what is meant here; rather, the human being is the sort of living being that belongs from the start to a *with-one-another in the state*. This with-one-another cannot be understood as based on the fact that there are many human beings whom one must keep in order; instead, we belong with one another to the state, we exist on the basis of the state. And this existence fulfills itself and takes shape through discourse, λόγος. The science that is concerned with the ability to talk, *rhetoric*, is the fundamental science of human beings, the *political* science.

In this connection we understand by what right, even in the face of the overpowering definition of the human being as *seeing ideas*, Aristotle nevertheless arrived at the question of whether *hearing* does not have preeminence. But the issue did not reach a complete decision. Therefore, both definitions were later misinterpreted and reinter-

preted: λόγος was taken as reason. The idea itself was also misinterpreted. (We will come back to this later.)

So, what is the meaning of idea? It is the look of things that we already have in view in advance when we see individual things, when we want to grasp this and that. ἰδέα = *Being that is viewed in advance*.

Now, about *light*.

1. Light, if we are to take this phenomenon as we immediately experience it, gives itself to us as that which we always view in advance in the sense of bright and dark, even if we do not grasp it objectively.
2. We have shown that brightness is the *transparent*, the *penetrating*, that which seeks and creates a way through, what *allows a way through*.

From this, we will now arrive at the common feature of *idea and light*, which will enable us to see how the idea is depicted by the sensory image of light. Idea and light enable us to grasp beings, to provide us with a connection and pathway to individual things, to what they are.

b) Freedom as binding oneself to the illuminating

We must provisionally outline what *freedom* means, not arbitrarily according to some random concept, but rather by holding to what the story in the allegory itself shows us.

The *second stage* resulted in *one* mode of liberation, the third in *another*. The liberation in the second stage is nothing other than the removal of the chains on the neck and legs. Liberation here is therefore a mere taking-away of something, becoming free from something, no longer being bound by something. Hence, the second stage means *lack of restraint*, therefore something *negative*. Someone liberated in this way consequently falls into confusion; he is helpless as soon as he gazes into the fire and wants to go back to the chains. What he really seeks is *support, certainty, and stability*: these are what he finds lacking in the supposed liberation at the first stage.

The *third stage* does not merely take away the chains, but leads the human being up and out of the cave into the light. Now, *to be free* is not to be released from something but to be led forth to something. Not to be free from, but to become free *for something*—for the light.

In this, a step-by-step habituation to the light takes place. Habituation is nothing but becoming increasingly accustomed and binding oneself to the light and the source of light; habituation is *binding oneself to the self-binding and becoming accustomed to the light*, putting oneself under the *binding obligation* of what the things in the light demand, and willing this.

We therefore see *two different modes of liberation* (or of freedom). The latter stands in connection with the light, *freedom in the positive sense*. We see that to become free in the authentic sense means to bind oneself to the light, to habituate oneself to it.

How are looking into the light and habituating oneself to the light an *increase in freedom*? Light and brightness as what illuminates. But light has yet another characteristic that is also expressed in language. Compare Schiller: “Bright as day the night is lit.”¹⁶ The night is permeable, something like a forest clearing free of trees, so that it allows a view through it. Light liberates, it sets free a passage, an opening, an overview; it clears. The dark is cleared, goes over into the light.

Binding oneself to the light is what liberates. Binding oneself in this way is the highest relation to freedom, is being-free itself.

§20. Freedom and beings (Being)

a) Freedom as binding oneself to the essential law of Dasein and of things

Freedom, to be free, means to bind oneself to what makes one free, what lets one through, the penetrable, or to speak without images: the *ideas*, which are depicted in a sensory image as light.

The ideas give the appearance of beings, that is, their *Being*. Becoming free for the light means making the effort to authentically understand what things are, *binding oneself to the essential law of things* on the basis of which we first grasp things in their Being-such-and-such.

The freer we become and the more originally we bind ourselves to the essential laws of things, the nearer we come to beings and the more we *come to be*. In each case, the degree and the extent of human *actuality* depends on the degree and the greatness of human *freedom*. This freedom is not lack of restraint; rather, it is all the greater the more originary and broad the *binding* of man is, the more that in his comportment, man sets his Being back into the *roots* of his Dasein, into the fundamental domains into which he is thrown as a historical being.

These are theses and things that man today finds difficult to understand. All scientific cognition secures *nearness* to beings only if it grows from a *historical* binding of man to Dasein.

16. “Das Lied von der Glocke,” v. 192. [In Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke in 5 Bänden*, vol. 1: *Gedichte* (Munich: Hanser, 2004), pp. 429–42; and see “The Song of the Bell” in *The Poems of Schiller*, trans. E. P. Arnold-Foster (New York: Henry Holt, 1902), pp. 246–59.]

(This is not being said for purposes of the “Alignment.”¹⁷ Nor is it necessary for me to defend myself. . . .¹⁸ If one now demands of scholars that they subscribe to a proclamation that all science is grounded. . . . This all indicates that today, our Dasein is confused. A transformation of our entire Dasein is necessary, a transformation that can come about only step by step, and cannot be dealt with by knowledge alone.)

b) The view of essence that reaches ahead as a projection of Being (with examples from nature, history, art, and poetry)

The point is that *freedom means binding to the essential law of humanity*. *Originary* binding means a binding that must *take place in advance*; we do not first grasp essence on the basis of the greatest possible investigation of facts, but instead, we can determine facts only once we have comprehended the essence of things.

This is the *fundamental condition for all sciences*. I will give some examples here to show that all comportment, even the knowing comportment toward beings, even scientific comportment, is grounded on an *originary view of essence* that must develop in each case according to the depth of human beings.

Let us think of particular great discoveries about nature (by Kepler, Newton, Galileo). What is the basis for the great achievements of these much-admired natural scientists from the beginning of modernity? What is the difference between modern natural science and that of antiquity? One may say that modern science introduced the *experiment*. But that is an error. Neither does the meaning of modern science lie in the fact that, in contrast to the earlier, qualitative form of observation, quantitative observation gained ground—“mathematization”!

Both things already existed among the Greeks, and both fail to characterize modernity, because both have the decisive point as their *condition of possibility*: namely, that Galileo, with the means of ancient physics, established a *new fundamental position toward actuality*; that, *before* all experiments and all mathematics, *before* all questions and determinations, he first laid down what *should belong to the essence of a nature*, in that he approached it as the *spatiotemporal totality of the motion of mass-points*. By *reaching ahead* into actuality, he laid down what a nature should be. Only on the basis of this approach did it become possible to experiment, to question nature, to listen in on it, as it were,

17. [*Gleichschaltung*: the Nazi party’s systematic program of eliminating all rival organizations and ideologies, bringing all political and civic institutions into line with the will of the Führer.]

18. {This and the following ellipses are omissions in the transcript by Wilhelm Hallwachs.}

and then to measure it. So here is a quite *definite advance understanding* of what nature as a being should be.

It is a completely different question whether, regardless of this approach and despite it, nature was held directly close to man and kept within his power, or whether quite different domains inserted themselves between nature and man, so that this hollowing out of man could come about—so that man no longer has a relation to nature. *Technology* has blocked this relation.

How great the distance has become, natural science itself is quite incapable of deciding. That is philosophy's prerogative. "The world-view of the natural sciences" is nonsense from the start.

Another area of knowledge is that of the *science of history* and its knowledge of human work and fate. *Burckhardt* is not a great historian simply because he read sources and promulgated them, or because he discovered manuscripts, but because on the basis of the greater depth of his existence, he had a view of the essence of human action that reached ahead, a view of what human greatness, human limitation, and human fate are. He *actually understood the Being* of this domain, he had an *understanding* of it *in advance*. Only thereby did he manage to research the facts in a new way.

Now, one says that since then, science has made powerful progress, that so much new material has been discovered that an individual would no longer be in a position to achieve a synthesis. The very fact that one speaks of a synthesis proves that one does not know what one is talking about. *In advance* of all synthesis, there must be the *fundamental understanding* of what history is. This first makes it possible to experience and comprehend facts.

Only the weakness of today's humanity has brought us to the point where we are now just piling up facts. It is as if this infinitely increasing material were the reason why we do not see any history anymore. Humanity remains in submission to the hopelessness of its inner impoverishment and inner baselessness.

The fact that every essential, fundamental relationship to actuality is conditioned by this view of essence applies to *art* as well, and above all to *poetry*. Art and its essence have been misinterpreted, just like history. One sees art and artworks as that in which the artist expresses his psychic life! The essence of art does not consist, either, in picturing reality. Nor is its purpose that we should take pleasure in it, should enjoy it, but rather, the innermost sense of all artistic formation is to reveal the *possible*, that is, the *free, creative projection* of what is *possible for the Being of humanity*.

Through art, we first attain the basis and directive for seeing reality, for comprehending each individual reality as what it is, in the light of the possibilities. This is why poetry signifies far more than all science.

The great poets *Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Homer* have achieved far more than any scientist.

This binding oneself to what things are in their essence, this *projection that reaches ahead*, is what makes the individual being in everyday reality visible in the first place. *Freedom, that is, the binding to the essential lawfulness of things, is a fundamental precondition for beings, a precondition for beings to announce themselves as such.*

This binding is to be achieved by the *individual* human being. But the achievement is not up to the arbitrary will of the individual, but depends on the historical Dasein of humanity.

If idea, light, and freedom go together in this way, this will clarify what Plato wants to say in the allegory about the *essence of truth as unconcealment*.

Next time we will attempt to bring the essence of freedom and the essence of light and beings into close connection with the essence of truth.

§21. On the question of the essence of truth as unconcealment

a) The doctrine of ideas and the question of truth¹⁹

We were asking about the essence of truth. In this question, we were not seeking a detached, abstract concept, which, the more general it is, the more empty and unrestrained it becomes. Rather, we were seeking the essence of truth as that which rules our Dasein through and through as a historical Dasein and thereby defines it. This essence cannot be conceived in the moment on the basis of some accidental circumstance; rather, it must be drawn from the decision for the future through historical confrontation.

In this confrontation, we have encountered two fundamental orientations of the essence of truth: truth as unconcealment and truth as correctness, as they were experienced and grasped conceptually among the Greeks.

We have seen that, with the Greeks in the sixth century, the concept of truth as unconcealment was driven back and the concept of correctness became predominant. In Plato, the two fundamental orientations collided once more, although Plato neither knew this nor intended it. Instead, this collision happened on its own under the compulsion of the questions raised.

19. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 8 January 1934.}

We have focused on Plato's philosophy, not because it deserves our particular esteem, but because it is the crux of Greek philosophy. It is no accident that one characterizes Plato's philosophy as the *doctrine of ideas*. It is not accidental, although it is not necessary either, that this doctrine has been grasped only from this point of view.

For us, the issue is whether we can arrive at an essential understanding of the essence of truth through the doctrine of ideas. If we talk of the doctrine of ideas, then we are displacing the fundamental question into the framework of ideas. If one interprets ideas as representations and thoughts that contain a value, a norm, a law, a rule, such that ideas then become conceived of as norms, then the one subject to these norms is the human being—not the historical human being, but rather the human being in general, the human being in itself, or humanity. Here, the conception of the human being is one of a *rational being in general*. In the Enlightenment and in liberalism, this conception achieves a definite form. Here all of the powers against which we must struggle today have their root.

Opposed to this conception are the *finitude, temporality, and historicity* of human beings. The confrontation in the direction of the future is not accidental either; rather, to the extent that our philosophical questioning has not just now, but for decades. . .²⁰

On the basis of this new starting point, as it has been developed in our thinking, the whole concept {of beings and of Being}²¹ is entirely new. *On this basis* we will ask about the essence of truth and *here* we will complete the confrontation with antiquity.

The *inception* is decisive. Only the *inception* of things is *great, powerful, and fruitful* in itself. Plato sets down this inception in a myth (*not* in a definition), in the story of the prisoners in the cave. This story develops in four stages. Up to this point, we have presented the first three stages.

The third stage encompasses the authentic liberation of the human being from the cave into the light of the sun. This gives us various elements: *idea, light, freedom, beings, truth*. We were to observe the connection between *idea and light, light and freedom, freedom and Being*, and finally *the connection of all of these with truth*.

b) Degrees of unconcealment.

The ideas as what is originally unconcealed (ἀληθινόν)
and what *is* in the proper sense (ὄντως ὄν)

We will attempt a coherent presentation of what we presented in the previous lectures, as it is set down in the Platonic approach. Every interpretation of a poetic work goes beyond what is to be interpreted;

20. {Gap in Hallwachs's transcript.}

21. {Conjecture; gap in Hallwachs's transcript.}

it must understand the author better than he understood himself, so that in this way we can create something positive for ourselves, given that we ourselves did not create the work in question. Our interpretation maintains itself in the orientation to Greek philosophy, but it goes beyond Plato.

Now, in the third stage, what is said *directly* about truth? [The liberated prisoner would be unable to see even one of] τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα ἀληθῆ (516a3)—even one of the things that are now claimed as unconcealed in this state of liberation from the cave. ἀληθῆ [“unconcealed,” plural]—it is not *one* Being that is spoken of, but rather a *multiplicity* (multiplicity of the ideas), τὰ νῦν [the things now].

Unconcealment is also spoken of in the second stage, in the comparative: that what is seen in the second stage is *more unconcealed* (ἀληθέστερα, 515d6–7) than what was seen in the first stage. There is, therefore, an *increase in unconcealment*. So presumably an increase will also take place in the third stage—in fact, in the third stage the *highest level* will be reached, which is followed by no further levels, so that we stand beside what is *unconcealed in the proper sense and in the first rank*.

What is now unconcealed in the third stage is *the most unconcealed of all* that is given within the domain of truth. Granted, Plato does not use the expression ἀληθέστατα [most unconcealed], but instead, as he does in other places, when he speaks of the *genuinely* unconcealed, he uses the word ἀληθινόν. This is a very particular construction that can be made clear through examples. τὸ ξύλον = wood; ξύλινον = wooden. Hence, ἀληθινόν = what is unconcealed through and through, what constitutes pure unconcealment.

The question is now whether Plato in fact addresses the *ideas* as what is most unconcealed and whether he calls what is most unconcealed ἀληθινόν, *true* and *in Being*. True in the sense of unconcealment means the unconcealment of *Being*, the revelation of *Being*; beings are the revealed. Accordingly, the increase in the revealed corresponds to an increase of Being, μᾶλλον ὄν, *what is to a greater degree*.

In the second stage, what is seen is what *is* to a greater degree, a being in the more genuine sense. The first stage describes how the prisoners take what has been assigned to them, the shadows, as what is. Here in the third stage, which describes *the genuinely revealed*, the genuine *beings* also come to light.

Where Plato now speaks of these, he expresses a characteristic in the following way: τὸ ὄντως ὄν, the being that *is* in such a way that only something that *is* can be. The being that is a being through and through is the highest intensification of the unconcealed. The ὄντως ὄν is the highest intensification on the part of the ὄν [what is], just as the ἀληθινόν is the highest intensification on the part of the ἀληθές [the unconcealed]. (Both are the idea.)

We need to show that the idea is in fact addressed as the revealed. We will take up two characteristic passages as evidence in order to make clear the inner connection between the ideas and the designation ὄντως ὄν, what genuinely is.

Republic, book VI, 490a8ff.: The question here concerns the kind of human being whom the Greeks call a φιλομαθής, one who has the drive to learn. What kind of human being is this, the one who authentically wills to know?

... ὅτι πρὸς τὸ ὄν πεφυκῶς εἶη ἀμιλλᾶσθαι ὃ γε ὄντως φιλομαθής, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιμένει ἐπὶ τοῖς δοξαζομένοις εἶναι πολλοῖς ἐκάστοις, ἀλλ' ἰοὶ καὶ οὐκ ἀμβλύνειτο οὐδ' ἀπολήγοι τοῦ ἔρωτος, πρὶν αὐτοῦ ὃ ἐστίν²² ἐκάστου τῆς φύσεως ἄψασθαι ᾧ προσήκει ψυχῆς ἐφάπτεσθαι τοῦ τοιούτου—προσῆκει δὲ συγγενεῖ—ᾧ πλησιάσας καὶ μιγείς τῷ ὄντι ὄντως, γεννήσας νοῦν καὶ ἀλήθειαν, γνοίη τε καὶ ἀληθῶς ζῶη καὶ τρέφοιτο καὶ οὕτω λήγοι ὠδίνος, πρὶν δ' οὐ;

This one, the one who authentically wills to know, is one who, in his very essence, feels a fervor for what *is* as such, who cannot stand idle among the assortment of individual things, which one so commonly takes for what *is* {first and second stages of the cave}. In contrast, he sets out on the path, he is constantly under way and does not allow himself to be dazzled by what is right in front of him, he does not relinquish ἔρως [eros, passion] until he has grasped what constitutes the *what-Being*, the *essence* of things within the whole of what is, and has done so by using the capacity suited to grasping this *what-Being*: eros. With this capacity, he brings himself together with the ὄν ὄντως, with what *is* in the genuine sense. By engendering understanding and unconcealment, he will truly know and live and nourish himself, and thereby rid himself of pain.

The one who, in the drive to know, reaches out to grasp the ideas, is inspired by the drive to bring himself together with what genuinely is. The *idea* is grasped here as what is *genuinely*.

Our next question is: does Plato also refer to this *Being that most is* as *the most unconcealed*?

Second passage: Sophist, 240a7ff. The issue here is, what is an εἶδωλον? In the first three stages, we have seen that human beings are not in a position to look right away into the light and at the sun. Instead, their blind eyes must slowly become accustomed {to the glare and the brightness of the light and the sun}.²³

22. {Heidegger's variant reading of the text; Oxford edition: ὃ ἐστίν.}

23. {Conjecture; gap in Hallwachs's transcript.}

This difference between εἶδωλον and ἰδέα, or εἶδος, plays an important role in the philosophy of Plato. εἶδος (ιδέα) means the look of something itself, what, for example, makes a house what it is. εἶδωλον is an image, a likeness; it too is a kind of look. For example, a photograph also gives us a look, but it does not give us the house itself. εἶδος is applied to the things themselves. The essence of the house is τὸ κοινόν [the common], what pertains to each individual house. Individual houses, tables, and the like are likenesses, εἶδωλα, to the extent that each looks like the essence. εἶδωλον is the name for the individual being. This chair is a quite specific image of chairs in general.

- Τί δῆτα, ὦ ξένε, εἶδωλον ἂν φαίμεν εἶναι πλὴν γε τὸ πρὸς τἀληθινόν ἀφωμοιωμένον ἕτερον τοιοῦτον;
- Ἅτερον δὲ λέγεις τοιοῦτον ἀληθινόν, ἢ ἐπὶ τίνι τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶπες;
- Οὐδαμῶς ἀληθινόν γε, ἀλλ' ἐοικὸς μὲν.
- Ἄρα τὸ ἀληθινόν ὄντως ὃν λέγων;
- Οὕτως.

- What should we understand by εἶδωλον? What should we understand by likeness or copy other than that which is likened to the genuinely unconcealed and consequently is secondary and heterogeneous? {Here, an image of something is given, an image that in a certain sense is likened to the thing itself. In this sense, it is a second thing just like the prototype. This is correct in a certain sense, but it is also a distortion.}
- Another thing like this, that is, another *genuinely* unconcealed thing, do you mean? {If the copy is designated as a second thing just like what it copies, then it *too* is an ἀληθινόν.}
- No, I mean that the image is like the being itself. {The copy is indeed like the genuine object in a certain sense, but *as* the copy it is never the authentic object itself (ἀληθινόν).}
- So do you understand by ἀληθινόν the ὄντως ὄν, the unconcealed in the genuine sense, what *is* in the genuine sense {the *idea*}?
- Yes, that's it.

In Plato, then, the *idea* is *what is in the genuine sense*. The third stage, which treats the unconcealed in the sense of the idea, also treats what is *unconcealed* in the *highest* sense and therefore what *is* in the *highest* sense.

c) The ideas as what is seen in a pre-figuring (projective) viewing

How can the ideas be called what is unconcealed in the first rank? They are, so to speak, the vanguard for the genuinely true, they prepare the way for experiencing and pre-figuring a specific idea, a form;

they carry out a projection. This first makes it possible to show how individual things look and how individual things are to be grasped.

They (the ideas) achieve what comes first of all; they open the entryway to, the experience of, individual beings. They are *what is true*, because they first achieve all this. They give access to Being, just as light is the condition for our seeing individual things. They open up the understanding of what a thing is, as a *pre-understanding*. This gives access, it gives light, it is the condition of the possibility for us to see individual things. (The openness of beings and their belonging-together arise from Being and from the idea.)

The ideas, then, let the openness of beings arise *with* them. Hence, they themselves are genuinely *what is true*. Arise *with*! They themselves, by themselves alone, cannot achieve this, because we cannot speak of the ideas *by themselves*. It lies in the essence of the idea that it is always related to a *seeing*. The relation to a seeing belongs to the idea. This characteristic of what Plato calls the idea is no mere supplement; to be *seen* always belongs to the idea. (What is seen is always in relation to a seeing. Idea is always seen.)

This is a special kind of *seeing*, which is different from experiencing things. We encounter things, things come counter to us, are given to us. *Grasping the ideas* has nothing to do with tracking down some present-at-hand thing somewhere. The ideas *are* at all only *in* and *through* a *beholding* that first creates what can be beheld, a special sort of *creative* seeing. This sighting is not gaping at something; rather, it is *catching* sight, *creating*. Kant says that the human being, taken in this sense, is *creative*.

d) On the question of the character of the Being of the ideas

With this determination of the essence of the idea, we have achieved an essential insight, namely, that the ideas are not values present at hand somewhere, not a set of rules posted somewhere; instead, they *are*, and are encountered, in the comportment of human beings as they catch sight of things.

But neither are they just something subjective, an invention, a fantasy of human beings. They are neither objects nor subjects. This distinction between subject and object is by no means suitable and is unable to express the relationship between beholding and the idea itself.

What the ideas are, how they are, and whether they can be addressed as *Being* could not be answered up to this point—not because the question, as question, has not been adequately examined, but rather because it has not yet been posed at all.

Against the many attempts to pass off the idea as something subjective or, alternatively, to ground it objectively—this is still the most

philosophically valuable and genuine conception: *Augustine's* conception of the idea as *correlate of divine thought*—not the idea in itself, floating about freely, but rather in *relation* to an absolute subject, God. This is simply a *deflection of the question*, but nevertheless, it endured until *Hegel*. Since then: decline. It was not so long ago that one wanted to tell us that there are something like ideas in empty space, values in themselves, on the basis of which culture might then be formed.

Now, what follows for the conception of the essence of truth as it is in the third stage? With respect to what genuinely is, there are no truth and openness *in themselves* any more than there are ideas in themselves; rather, openness *becomes*, and it becomes only in the innermost essential relationship with *human beings*. Only insofar as the human being *exists* in a definite *history* are beings given, is truth given. There is no truth given in itself; rather, truth is *decision* and *fate* for human beings; it is something *human*.

But where can we find a human being who can definitively say what the truth is? This objection seems correct—when as we are doing here, truth is conceived as something human. One says that such a conception leads to *relativism* and then to *skepticism*.

We pose an opposing question! If it is said that this concept degrades the truth, then I ask in advance: does one know what *human being* means here and what is *human*? Or is the question of *who* man is perhaps a *fundamental question*, and even one that stands in an innermost connection with the question that we are asking, namely, the question of truth?

We are asking *what* the human being is and *what* is human. A problem arises: What is the inner connection between the essence of truth and the essence of the human being? Does the essence of truth determine the essence of the human being—or the other way around?

§22. The happening of truth and the human essence

a) The allegory of the cave as history (happening) of man

In our previous session²⁴ we tried to grasp the whole content of what is presented in the third stage, with the intention of experiencing how the essence of truth is to be determined on the basis of this stage. We have done so in a quite preliminary way. What is being directly said here about the true, the unconcealed?

What is under discussion is what is unconcealed *now*, in the third stage. We can gather from the entire content that a certain intensifica-

24. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 11 January 1934.}

tion of the unconcealed is at work. (Even in the second stage an intensification already took place.) The third stage deals with the *most unconcealed*, the ἀληθινόν, what is unconcealed through and through, what has no remnant left of concealment: the *idea* as what *most is*, that which *genuinely* constitutes what is.

This authentic being is in turn the most unconcealed. We proved this on the basis of two passages in the *Republic* and the *Sophist*. The φιλομαθής [lover of learning] is the one who endeavors to experience what *is* most of all, what authentically is; the one who is driven to strive for what *is* most of all.

The ἀληθινόν is what is unconcealed in the highest sense. What does it signify that the *idea* is the truest, the most unconcealed? We said that the idea is what always *precedes* in all unconcealment. So the understanding and experience of the idea is the precedent that must be comprehended in order to understand the particular. The view of the idea *opens up* the view to the Being of the particular.

The idea *clears*, it sheds light on the particular. Because the ideas are originally involved in providing access to the particular being, they constitute the *origin* of the unconcealed. They are essentially *implicated*, because the idea as what is seen *gives sight*. They are *implicated*, yet are never *in themselves* truth and validity.

But *what is seen* is given only as long as there is a *seeing*—seeing not as mere staring, but projecting, creative seeing, catching sight in the sense of creative viewing; taking into one's gaze and thereby first bringing about what one catches sight of.

Ideas are neither objectively present at hand, nor a matter of subjective opinion. Both orientations (as two poles) are equally askew and miss what was initiated in Plato, but not developed.

Nevertheless, truth in the genuine sense (unconcealment) is not the idea, but the seeing of the idea, the catching-sight of the idea or the creative *projection* of the essence of things.

Therefore truth is not an incident but a *happening* (the creative projecting of things). This happening, which up to now we have exhibited in its essential moments—which we posed to ourselves as questions about light and freedom, freedom and beings, truth and beings (Being)—is now resolved into a *happening of the creative catching sight of things*.

This catching sight is a self-binding. This binding of oneself is the authentic essence of liberation. This liberation is an access to beings.

b) Unconcealing as a fundamental characteristic of human ex-sistence

We can now indicate this happening in language on the basis of an opposition. We speak of ἀλήθεια (unconcealment); the contrary concept is *concealment*. Accordingly, we can say: the contrary happening is

unconcealing. This unconcealing happens through the creative projection of essence and of the essential law. This is a happening that *happens with humanity itself*. Revealing things in *human history* is something *human*.

This was the source of the objection that with this, the essence of truth is degraded to the preference and prerogative of the individual human being. Truth is humanized. This objection seems justified at first. In response to it we demand that the objector inform us what human means, give us a definition of the essence of humanity. What is man? This cannot be answered arbitrarily.

If up to now we have been considering the allegory of the cave {as the happening of the liberation of man for what is genuinely unconcealed},²⁵ we must experience what man is on the basis of this story, because on its basis we experience what truth and unconcealment are.

We are not humanizing the essence of truth: to the contrary, we are *determining the essence of human beings on the basis of truth*. Man is transposed into the various gradations of truth. Truth is not above or in man, but *man is in truth*. Man is in truth inasmuch as truth is this happening of the unconcealment of things on the basis of creative projection. Each individual does not consciously carry out this creative projection; instead, he is already born into a *community*; he already grows up within a quite *definite* truth, which he confronts to a greater or lesser degree.

Man is the one whose *history* displays the *happening of truth*.

There is one more thing that we can experience here. By way of the allegory of the cave we gain access to the essence of man insofar as *he* is that essence, in relation to himself, as himself. In this context we experience what man is, and we recognize that this question of who man is simply cannot be answered, say, by picking some random person on the face of the earth, listening in on him and interrogating him. This question can be answered only if it is *correctly posed*. One must always ask first: *Who are we?*

c) On the essential determination of man.

Truth as a fundamental happening in the human essence

We could not yet decide what man is (as viewed now from the allegory of the cave). This we can decide only if we participate in the entire “*story*” of the liberation. The liberation does not happen without violence (βίαια). So if man wants to know who he is, he *himself* must engage in the *movement* of these questions and become unsettled. The question is posed only where a decision is posed for man—a decision about himself and his relation to the powers that afflict him.

25. {Conjecture; gap in Hallwachs’s transcript.}

Thus the question of who man is, is a question with its very own character and cannot be compared to other questions, such as "What is a table?" or "What is a house?"

For the time being, we will simply have to stick to the answer that the allegory of the cave gives us. We must say: man is the one who, insofar as he *is*, *comports himself toward beings as revealed*, and who *in this Being*, becomes *revealed to himself*.

Man is this being who comports himself to beings as revealed because the *fundamental happening* is precisely that *creative* catching sight of the essence of things by *reaching forward*. Terminologically, we say: the human way to *be* is *existence*.

Only human beings *exist*. That is, in this manner of speaking we are taking the words "existence" and "exist" in a sense that is supposed to express solely the *Being of man*. *Ex-sistence*: man is ex-sistent, something that *steps out* of itself. In and during his Being, he is also always outside it. He is always with other beings, and it is only on this basis that he has his essential relation to himself, exposed to *beings as a whole*.

This fundamental mode of man as existing, as stepping outside himself, having stepped out into the confrontation of Being—we can get clearer about this mode of man by contrasting it to the Being of a *plant*, say, which has in common with man the fact that it is alive. But the plant, in its living Being, is completely confined within itself, dull, without relation to anything else that we call "revealed."

The *animal* is also, to a certain extent, confined within itself, has no consciousness "of itself," but has a different relation to its environment, so that it is *benumbed* by the environment, to which the animal relates on the basis of its drives. But the environment is something essential that belongs to the animal. The animal is confined within itself and at the same time benumbed. The essence of the organism is precisely to be connected to a environment, but to be benumbed in this connectedness.

With *man*, this connection to the environment is *cleared*. Man understands the environment *as* environment; he is thereby able to *master* it and *form* it.

Things are different with the *stone*, which is not confined within itself, because it is not opened up in the manner of living things. It simply occurs.

The *fundamental act in the human way of Being* is this, that man understands the Being and essence of things in advance, that is, the *fundamental happening of truth*. If man were not put into this happening, then he would be unable to exist, to be as man.

From this point on, we must free ourselves from a centuries-old error, the error of saying that man is an animal with *reason* as a supplement. We must rather define man from *above*, and *then* his charac-

ter as a living thing is to be determined. Reason should not be a superstructure added to the human body; instead, *embodiment* must be transposed *into the existence* of man.

This is why even an infant is not some sort of animal, but is *immediately* human. None of the utterances of a young human being may be grasped on the basis of animal biology; race and lineage, too, are to be understood on this [higher] basis, and are not to be represented by an antiquated biology based on liberalism.

The essence of truth opens itself to us not in just any cognition, in just any property, but as the *fundamental happening in the human essence*. With this, the question has been posed; but by no means has an answer been reached. We must say that all statements such as “man exists,” “truth is the fundamental happening of existence,” “the ideas have the character of truth”—these are all *philosophical* statements.

Philosophical truth is of a different sort from everyday truth. *Scientific truths* can and must be *proved* in a twofold sense. It must be possible to *support* what scientific propositions say with facts, or to *derive* them using formal logic.

In both regards, philosophical statements cannot be proved. But this is *no flaw*, for what is *essential* in all things in general is *unprovable*, and the advantage is precisely that every access to philosophy entails a fundamental disposition and a fundamental decision on the part of human beings. There can be no *philosophy that is standpoint-free*, with whose aid we find the truth. That is an error and a fraud.

We *initially* took the essence of truth as unconcealment; *now* we see that it is a happening, in the sense that a thing is taken out of concealment through *unconcealing*. This happening is the *fundamental happening of man*. It is subject to quite definite *conditions* and *forms of its occurrence*.

D. The fourth stage (516e3–517a6)

§23. The return of the liberated man into the cave

With this answer, we seem to have reached the goal of our question concerning how *Plato* defined ἀλήθεια. (Ascent and liberation would bind one to the idea.) But obviously *Plato*’s allegory still has a fourth stage. The ascent into liberation, which began inside the cave and led out up into the light, goes no further now in the fourth stage. Instead, the story goes back. The fourth stage presents *the descent of the liberated prisoner back into the cave*.

Let us resume narrating the full story.

SOCRATES: And now consider this: if the one who had become free in this manner were to descend back down {into the cave} again and

sit back down in the same place, wouldn't he suddenly find his eyes full of darkness there, having come out of the sun?

GLAUCON: Very much so.

SOCRATES: And if now, while his eyes were still defective, he had to compete again in asserting opinions about the shadows with those continually enchained, before he had adjusted his eyes again to the dark—which requires no insignificant period of time—wouldn't he be exposed to ridicule there, and wouldn't they say of him that he had made the ascent only to come back with his eyes corrupted and that going up is a complete waste of time? And the one who *now* wanted to lay hands on them to release them from the chains and to lead them up and out: if they {the enchained prisoners} could get hold of him to kill him, wouldn't they actually kill him, too?

GLAUCON: Certainly.

What happens here in the fourth stage? On the surface, we turn back to where we already were at the beginning, to what we already know. Taken this way, the fourth stage brings nothing new.

In this section, there is no more talk of what we have always asked about: the ἀληθές [the unconcealed]. For all the gradations of unconcealment have already been displayed. There is no more talk of light, freedom, what *is*, and ideas.

If we consider this, we might at first doubt whether this last segment should be taken as a last stage, whether Plato is not just providing a particular conclusion without essential content. That is how it looks on the surface, if we forget that the story as a whole is dealing with *human history*.

But if we do pay attention to this, then we really begin to wonder. The story ends with the prospect of *death*, which has not been dealt with up to this point. This glimpse of the possibility of the fate of death is not an accidental feature of animal life. Death is everyone's concern, as the ultimate *exit*; therefore, this is an essential section that determines the whole. We must attempt to draw out the essential strands, as we did in the other stages.

The whole story ends with the prospect of the fate of being killed, of the most radical expulsion of a human being from human community. *Whose* death is at issue here? The death of the one who makes it his task to will the liberation of the prisoners in the cave.

This liberator has not been dealt with up to this point. Now we hear explicitly about the liberator as part of this story. Earlier we heard that the liberator will commit acts of violence, and accordingly he gets paid back with an overpowering counter-violence.

The decisive question is, *who* is this liberator? And how is his existence to be grasped? What does a more precise characterization of the

liberator tell us about liberation—and therefore about the entire fate of the revelation of Being?

§24. The philosopher as liberator. His fate in the happening of revealing and concealing

The person of whom Plato speaks in the fourth section, who descends again, who perhaps seizes hold of some person or other to lead him out, is none other than the *philosopher*.

We know that in other passages, Plato defines the philosopher as follows: “The philosopher is the one whose innermost desire is to take into view what is, as such. It lies in the essence of the brightness of the place where the philosopher stands that he is never easy to see; for the view of the masses is incapable of seeing when it gazes toward what exceeds the everyday.”²⁶

We can already gather what is being said here from the Greek word “philosophy.” The σοφός is not the “wise man,” but one who understands how to do something, who knows a matter from the bottom up and thus can carry out the decision that sets standards. (The expression σοφός did not arise immediately with Greek philosophy, but later.) φίλος: the friend, the one who has the drive, the one in whom the innermost “must” is decisive.

Philosophy has nothing to do with science. All science is only research into things in a limited domain, with a limited way of posing questions. One cannot determine philosophy definitively on the basis of a science, such as philology, mathematics, biology, and so on. Instead, philosophizing is a *fundamental way of being human* that precedes all science.

Such a philosopher is the one who has climbed out of the cave, gotten used to the light, and then climbs back down as the liberator of the prisoners. *This* philosopher exposes himself to the fate of death, death in the cave at the hands of the powerful cave dwellers who set the standards in the cave.

Plato wants to remind us of the death of *Socrates* here. One will say that this case is unique, that in general the philosopher’s fate does not include drinking the cup of hemlock. On the whole, philosophers have had a pretty good time of it, superficially speaking. “They sit in their studies and occupy themselves with their thoughts.” But this would be a superficial way of thinking.

26. {Plato, *Sophist* 254a8–b1. Cf. Heidegger’s more literal translation in the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), p. 82: “. . . for the view of the soul of the masses is incapable of sustaining the gaze at the divine.”}

We are dealing here with an allegory. Killing does not have to consist exactly in offering the poison cup. Bodily death is not what is meant. And besides, this death is not the most difficult; it can take place biologically in sleep, in an unconscious state. What is really difficult about dying is rather that death in its full relentlessness stands before the eyes of man during his whole Being. Inner life becomes null and powerless.

This fate is one that no philosopher has yet avoided. This fate would still be ineluctable even today—if there were any philosophers. The *killing* consists in the fact that the philosopher and his questioning are suddenly transferred into the language of the cave dwellers, that he makes himself ridiculous before them, that he falls prey to public ridicule.

Therefore it belongs to the essence of the philosopher that he is *solitary*; it lies in his way to be, in the position he has in the world. He is all the more solitary because in the cave he cannot retreat. Speaking out from solitude, he speaks at the decisive moment. He speaks with the danger that what he says may suddenly turn into its opposite.

Nevertheless, the philosopher *must* climb down into the cave, but not in order to get into debates with the cave dwellers there, but only in order to seize this or that person whom he thinks he has recognized and lead him up the steep path, not through a one-time act but through the happening of history itself.

When we try to grasp the final section, we see that the *end* cannot be a matter of indifference. But we have not yet decided the question of the inner connection of this end with the whole history of the liberation of the man from the cave that has been carried out up to now.

We saw that what characterizes the individual stages of the story is the way in which, from stage to stage, truth and unconcealment change and intensify. In the fourth stage, we had no further experience of truth. But can we conclude from the fact that in the fourth stage, the topic is not explicitly ἀλήθεια, light, what *is*—can we conclude from this that ἀλήθεια is no longer central to what is happening here?

What happens in the fourth stage? The liberated man turns back into the cave, he himself is supposed to be in the cave, if only in order to liberate *one* other person. The one who has been filled with the sight of light is now supposed to go back to the cave dwellers and get into a conversation with them. He can do this only if he remains himself. On the basis of this attitude, he will say what he sees with his new eyes.

What he catches sight of, is from the start something different from what the cave dwellers see. He knows and sees what is light and what is shadow, what is true reality and what is semblance. He can decide from the start what sort of reality it is that the cave dwellers take as what *is*.

He is in a different situation from the cave dwellers, who are incapable of recognizing the shadows *as* shadows. He thus recognizes that

there are people to whom something is revealed, something like what he recognizes as the shadows. But he also recognizes that what is revealed to them does not constitute true reality. Instead, he recognizes that although a certain unconcealment does subsist within the cave, the people cling to the shadows, so what is unconcealed for the prisoners—the shadows as such—at the same time *covers up* (genuine) unconcealment for them.

The ἀλήθεια (in the cave) is also real, to be sure, but as such it conceals the reality outside. The unconcealment out there takes place in unison with the reality of the shadows. With the return of the liberated prisoner into the cave, he realizes above all that in unison with unconcealment, *concealment*, *semblance*, and *deception* happen and must happen. Accordingly, only *now* does he gain insight into the necessity of liberation; he realizes that this liberation cannot lead to some tranquil enjoyment and possession outside the cave, but that unconcealment happens in history, in the constant confrontation with the false and with semblance.

This leads to the fundamental insight that there is no *truth in itself* at all, but instead, truth *happens* in the innermost confrontation with *concealment* in the sense of *disguise* and *covering up*.

Thus we say that man, insofar as he exists, is thrust into relations on the basis of which beings and the world are revealed to him. Man, insofar as he exists, *is* in the truth. But it is evident that man exists as a historical people in community.

Man exists in the truth and in the untruth, in concealment and unconcealment *together*. These are not two separate spheres; instead, standing in the truth is always confrontation, an act of struggle. To persist in untruth is to slacken in the struggle. The more intensely man as historical man is afflicted and overwhelmed, the more intensely a people is afflicted and overwhelmed, the more necessary is the struggle for truth, that is, the confrontation with untruth.

The precondition for this is that the human being engaged in struggle must first of all decide for reality in *such a way* that the truly determinative forces of Dasein will *illuminate* the history and reality of a people and bring Dasein into them. Reality cannot provide the people with a place to stand; instead, spirit and the spiritual world of a people develop within history. History is not fulfilled in a time frame that ends in 1934 or 1935—maybe not until 1960.

Chapter Two

The Idea of the Good and Unconcealment

§25. Being free: acting together in the historical con-frontation of truth and untruth

- a) The philosopher's freedom:
being a liberator in the transition¹

In the previous session, we attempted to get clear about the *fourth stage*. What does it involve? What is its position within the whole? We discovered that the fourth stage is no mere appendix, nor a recapitulation: instead, the person under discussion here is fundamentally different from the other inhabitants of the cave. He has been transformed and he now has a different fate.

Plato designates him as the *philosopher*. Through this story, he intends to show what the philosopher is. The philosopher is a liberator, and he *is* only as such a liberator. Authentic freedom does not consist in dragging an inhabitant of the cave out into the light and leaving him there to laze about in the sun. Authentic freedom does not consist in tranquil enjoyment: to be free means to be a *liberator*.

The philosopher is not secure; as a liberator, he acts with others in the history of those who belong with him in a community according to their Being. Given what we have said, all human beings would have to become philosophers if they wanted to exist *authentically*. This is true inasmuch as being a philosopher, among the many possibilities for existing, means the fundamental way in which man takes a stance with respect to the *whole* of beings and toward the *history* of human beings.

We derive the fundamental character of philosophical Being from the allegory. We see that what makes one human *is not* to be bound in the cave, to feel at ease and to chatter away; *nor* is it to be in the opposite

1. {Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 18 January 1934.}

condition outside of the cave. Instead, the human *is the transition* out of the cave into the light and back into the cave. This *transition* is the authentic history of man, a fate that one cannot shake off by declaring that one is not interested in philosophy. A fate can only be surmounted—or one can founder on that fate without knowing it.

b) Truth and untruth. Modes of untruth as concealment

This story is supposed to tell us what *truth* is. Our interpretation of the fourth stage allows us a remarkable expansion of this question: we concluded that only the one who turns back is in a position to comprehend what those down below are seeing, namely, the shadows. On the basis of the return, the *difference between Being and seeming* only now becomes possible. Only now does the difference between *unconcealment and idea* as opposed to *the concealed* open up.

But if this transition belongs to human history, if human beings cannot get away from it, then this means that there is no pure unconcealment. Instead, to this unconcealment there also belong semblance, disguise, and the covering-up of things, or, as we also say: *untruth*.

This is the decisive answer: *untruth belongs to the essence of truth*. Untruth is not simply truth's opposite; rather, only as confrontation is truth as unconcealment cast into untruth and embedded there.

From this there follows a double concept of untruth. In Greek, truth is a negative, a privative in the expression "unconcealment." Now we understand why the Greeks do not express truth positively. From the very first, what *is* must be torn out of concealment into history, must be wrested from concealment. Truth is not a possession.

The initial counter-concept to unconcealment in the sense of truth is, in a formal linguistic sense, *concealment*; but now we see that for us this would be untruth. But if something is concealed, that does not yet mean that we therefore know something false; it is simply *not knowing*. The concealed has a double sense: 1) something with which we are unfamiliar; 2) something to which we have no possible connection.

Concealment is a characteristic of what we call a *secret*. But concealment is not untruth in the sense of *falsehood*. Rather, concealment is the concealed in the sense that something is covered up, disguised to us. Mere *seeming*.

It belongs to the essence of *seeming* that it appears to us, that it shows itself. What a thing is, is its εἶδος, its look. Seeming means that something only seems (looks) *as if*; for example, a stage set of a house.

From this we arrive at the view that what we routinely call untruth is integral to entirely essential relations. *First*, *concealment* is the *secret* of the not-yet-experienced, of what cannot be experienced; *second*, it means covering-up, disguise, seeming. Accordingly, if *philosophy* is this *primor-*

dial history of man, in which he is in his historical Being . . .² This philosophizing is not some arbitrary, detached speculation about arbitrary things; rather, philosophy and philosophizing are the *genuine process* in the history of a human being and a people.

Accordingly, the *philosopher* is the one who creates the preview and purview into which this happening presses and drives. The philosopher is not the one who retrospectively applies philosophical concepts to his time; instead, he is the one who is cast out in advance of his time and anticipates its fate.³ For the philosopher, this cannot be a pretext to withdraw as a superior being; instead, he must suffer this fate in the highest degree, in the sense that one bears one's fate.

§26. The idea of the good as highest idea: the empowerment of Being and unconcealment

When we look over the whole in this way, we recall that we have not completed our interpretation of this story as regards a major point, for we asked: what does the fate of man as liberator look like?

It has come to light that he has the ability to catch sight of the highest of the ideas, ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα, the *idea of the good*. We have said that we wanted to leave the elucidation of what Plato understood by the highest idea until the end. We now want to ask, considering the whole story: what does this *highest idea of the good* mean? With this, we will also gain some insight into Platonic philosophy.

The ideas are in a place above the heavens (ὑπερουράνιος τόπος), out beyond the heavens (in the allegory: outside the cave). This ascent out of the cave, to speak without any allegory, is the progress to a place, the upward path that the soul traverses to reach a place that Plato calls the τόπος νοητός. νοητός = the apprehensible; νοεῖν = to apprehend; νοῦς = the faculty of apprehending, reason; τὰ νοητά = the ideas.

Plato says: in the field of what can be apprehended by man in general, what is caught sight of *last* is the idea of the good; and it can barely be brought into view, only with trouble, with effort. The ascent, and thus the history of liberation, comes to an end only when man's apprehension has reached *what can be apprehended only last*, τελευταῖα ἰδέα. The idea of the good is what stands, in a certain sense, at the end.

τέλος (τελευταῖος), end, does not mean goal. Neither is it a negative concept. It means end in the sense of limit, limitation—the form that stamps and thus really determines everything, the limit that really embraces and determines all.

2. {Gap in Hallwachs's transcript.}

3. [Alternate translation: "anticipates his own fate."]

- a) The idea of the idea. On grasping the highest idea on the basis of the general essence of idea

Plato speaks of the idea of the good in two major passages: at the beginning of book VII of the *Republic* and in book VI, 506–511. Now we want to get clear about what the idea of the good really means here.

To begin with, as regards *grasping* the idea: it can be glimpsed only with effort, so it is even harder to speak of it, much less conceive of it. In both passages, Plato speaks of this idea only indirectly, in the *sensory image* with which we are already familiar: the sun as the sensory image of the highest idea.

If this is how matters stand with the highest idea—that one can barely catch sight of it—then we must get clear that everything depends on bringing our questioning in the right direction, that we cannot just run out and snap it up, in a readymade formula as it were, an answer that's handy for everyday use. We may not apply standards from our everyday life and opinions as we try to grasp what Plato means here.

On the other hand, we have to get clear that Plato is not thinking about something mysterious, some sort of remote thing that you can get to only with tricks, or with an extraordinary vision based on an enigmatic faculty; instead, Plato insists quite soberly that one has to attain what is at work in the idea through serious, step-by-step philosophizing, by asking one's way through. Only philosophizing labor, not a so-called intuition, leads to what Plato intends.

Even then, what we are to grasp cannot be said, at least not in the way that everything else that we can learn and know can be said. What is to be known philosophically must be known and said, or not said, in a different form from that of all scientific cognition.

But then again, the unsayable in the strict sense is what I run up against if I exert myself and have exerted myself to reach what is sayable in the highest sense. Not what any dunderhead can say, but the sayable that assails us more and more as we work our way through things with the greatest rigor.

Two ways to Plato's views are possible: 1. A thorough interpretation of book VI. But with this, we would pass beyond the frame and context of our work so far. 2. We will try to discover what "*highest idea*" means here by a process of intensification, on the basis of the characteristics of the essence of the idea that we clarified earlier. We then want to see whether what we have attained in this way is what Plato says elsewhere about the highest idea.

1. The extrapolation of the *highest* idea from the general essence of idea,
2. Investigation of whether the result accords with what Plato says.

So we must try once again to characterize the essence of the idea; we must see what the ideas are. The ideas are what is most unconcealed and what most *is*. They are the most unconcealed, inasmuch as they make possible the unconcealment of particular beings in their Being-such-and-such. They are what most of all *is*, in that by virtue of {them, *Being* becomes understandable, “in the light of which,” as we still say today, that which individually is, is first of all a *being*, and is *the* being *that* it is.}⁴ So it is apparent that the characterization of the essence of the idea already involves a highest intensification. The *idea as such* is something that has been intensified to the highest degree: the *most unconcealed* and what *most of all is*.

Now we should ask: is a still higher intensification possible? For there is still supposed to be a *highest idea* over and above this, what genuinely lets unconcealment and Being *arise* and makes them possible.

We also saw that the idea has the function of letting beings become *visible* in that which they are, and thus letting *truth* arise. The *highest idea* has the task of making unconcealment *in general* possible, of empowering beings to be what they properly *are as* beings. This amounts to the *formal* extrapolation of the *idea of the idea*.

If we ask for the *content* of what the highest idea is and what the *good* means, we must free ourselves from every sentimental notion, but also from conceptions that have become run-of-the-mill through Christian morality and then in secularized ethics. ἀγαθός, good, originally has no moral meaning.

The good, for the Greeks, is not the opposite of the evil, much less of the “sinful.” There is sin only where there is Christian faith. But neither is the good to be understood in the feeble sense of “he’s a good person” (but a bad musician) —in an innocuous, ladylike sense.

ἀγαθός is when we say, as after a confrontation or discussion: good, the matter is settled (after a decision). The good is what succeeds, stands fast, holds up, what is fit for something. A pair of good skis, boards that hold something up. What demands the highest decision and the highest seriousness and intensity of Dasein.

It is hopeless to want to comprehend the essence of the good on the basis of the Christian concept—this concept will not take us one step closer to understanding what the good actually means.

The idea of the good has a completely different sense. We now want to look at Plato himself and ask how he, for his part, expresses himself regarding the good as the highest idea. In our next session we want to get into the closing section of book VI, in order then to make it clear in what sense the essence of truth coincides with the highest idea, and thus with the essence of the good.

4. {Gap in Hallwachs’s transcript. Editor’s conjecture based on the lecture course of the same name from Winter Semester 1931–1932 (GA 34), p. 99.}

b) Approach to the complete determination of
the idea of the good as the highest idea

We ask: what do we understand by the idea of the good? Furthermore, what does the essential determination of the highest idea yield us for the determination of the essence of truth?

We have cited two major passages from Plato's *Republic* (VI, 506–511; VII, 517a–e). Plato does not clarify the essence of the highest idea directly; this already tells us that the highest idea is hard to grasp and even harder to say. The *sensory image of the sun* is the *path* to clarifying what Plato understands as the highest idea.

We now want to pursue *this* path of clarification: on the basis of the essence of the idea that we explained earlier, we will set out *in advance* what the highest idea is, using a procedure of intensification. Then we want to examine to what extent Plato's own interpretation corresponds to what we ourselves have set out in advance as the essence of the highest idea.

The idea was the ὄντως ὄν and the ἀληθινόν, that which most *is* and is most revealed. The ἀληθινόν is what in the first place, that is, before all things, must be revealed to us in order for us to grasp a being as such. We must understand in advance what it means to be a book. In every thing, the idea is the *most genuine* Being and the *most unconcealed*.

This elucidation of the idea shows that a characteristic of the idea is intensification. This characteristic of intensification means that *this*, as what is highest, is, insofar as it *rules*, also the *origin* for what stands beneath it, that is, for what is revealed to us as something that is. The idea as such has the general function of *making possible* this characteristic of ruling, making beings as beings possible in their openness. It is the *essence of the idea to make beings possible*.

The *highest* idea is the *good*. ἀγαθός means for the Greeks what prevails, what stands firm. Being good means to prevail, to stand firm, and thus to take a stand, to provide a place to stand. The essence of the idea corresponds to this: what makes possible that which is and is revealed. The idea as the enabling must be what truly prevails and makes things stand ready. Hence the *highest* idea is the *good*. So much for the *formal* explanation, so to speak.

We now ask how Plato, for his part, develops the essence of the highest idea of the good on the basis of the sensory image.

As regards the essence of matters of state in general—the state, πόλις—Plato accepts the principle that the *rule* of human being-with-one-another in the state must essentially be determined by a definite kind of ruling human beings, and a definite form of ruling.

Taken in the usual sense, one who rules in the state must be a *philosopher*. This naturally does not mean that professors of philosophy should

become Reich-chancellors—that would be a disaster from the start. But it means that the people who are endowed with the rule of the state must be philosophizing human beings. Philosophers, as philosophizing human beings, have the task and function of φύλακες, guardians. They have to be on guard to make sure that rulership and the state's ruling structure are thoroughly under the sway of philosophy—not as some system, but as a knowing that is the deepest and broadest knowledge of man and man's Being.

On the basis of this knowing, standards and rules are to be established within which every authentic decision and setting of standards takes place. In a state, says Plato, there can be only *a few* such guardians.

Now, Plato's whole work {the *Republic*} is concerned with the question: in what way, by what means, and in what form can a state educate its own guardians of this sort? In this context Plato asks (in the allegory of the cave as well) what knowing is.

Plato did not pose the question of the essence of knowing because it belongs to the academic concept of epistemology, but because *knowing* constitutes the innermost content of the *Being of the state* itself, inasmuch as the state is a *free*, which also means *binding* power of a people. *This is why* the question of the essence of knowing is *the fundamental question*.

§27. The idea of the good and light as the yoke between seeing and the visible—truth and Being

Plato says that those who know in the highest sense must be united in knowing—in a knowing that is acquired every time by beginning with verbal knowledge, that is, with what is common chatter, but that ascends upward along the steep path from the cave to understand and grasp the ideas.

a) Seeing (ὁρᾶν) and understanding that apprehends (νοεῖν)

To explain this knowing and grasping of the ideas adequately, Plato distinguishes between two fundamental modes of cognition:

1. seeing with the eyes, ὁρᾶν,
2. νοεῖν, the apprehending understanding of the ideas.

This latter knowing, in the sense of knowing the true essence of things, is to be explained through the *sensory image* of *natural* apprehending and understanding. Here Plato presents the essence of genuine comprehension through the ideas, explaining this essence as a schematic counterpart to natural seeing and what pertains to it. Thereby Plato also displays what pertains to genuine comprehension.

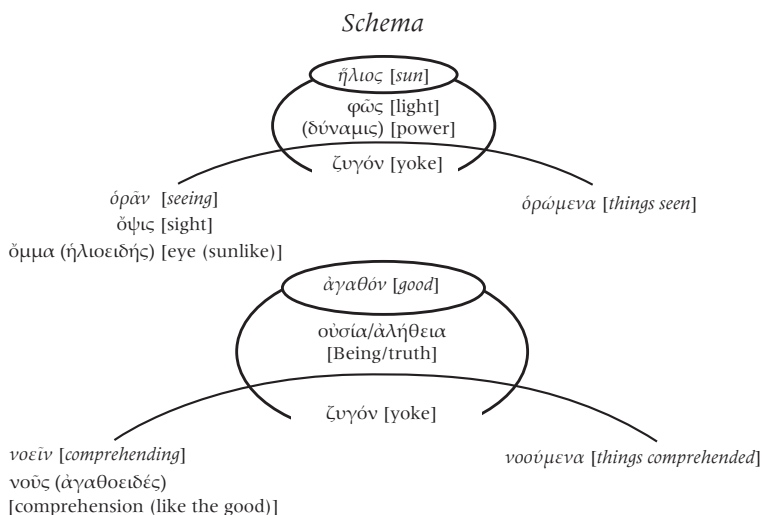
In this context Plato presents the idea of the *good* anew. In the following schema, there stands on one side the phenomenon that we take as our point of departure: seeing, ὁρᾶν, seeing with the eyes; on the other side stands that which is to be symbolized by this seeing: νοεῖν as the seeing and grasping of the idea.

To all seeing there belongs the following:

1. the performance of the act, the activity of seeing, ὁρᾶν,
2. something that is seen in this activity of seeing, what is caught sight of (the thing seen), ὁρώμενα.

Correspondingly, we understand knowing as:

1. the seeing of the essence of things, νοεῖν,
2. what is understood and grasped in this, νοούμενα.



Proceeding from ordinary seeing, Plato says: for the act of seeing to be performed, there must be a possibility and a capacity for it. There must be something that makes the performance of this act possible. Similarly, there must be something that puts a being in the position to become *something visible*, that enables the being to happen.

An enabling power, δύναμις, is required for the fact of seeing and being seen in each instance. These powers, δυνάμεις, which enable the performance of *seeing* and the fact of *being seen*, must be one and the same. Both of these, seeing as act and being seen, must be joined in the *yoke* (ζυγόν) of the same power.

If we now focus on these facts and *formally* transpose them to the *higher* seeing of things, we can say, on the basis of natural experience, that in order for things to become *visible*, it must be *bright*. To visibility there belongs the enabling power, brightness, light, and therefore the *sun*.

Therefore the *yoke* just mentioned, the one that joins both (ὄρα̃ν and ὁράμενα), is in some sense the *light*, and correspondingly the source of light = the sun (φῶς, ἥλιος). As we said, in keeping with this fundamental thought that these powers of seeing and being seen go hand in hand, the light, the sun, must be the enabling power for seeing itself. (It is impossible that different powers underlie seeing and being seen.)

We know from our earlier discussions that, among all the forms of sensory perception, the Greeks gave preeminence to *sight* and *seeing*. The most preeminent sense is ὄψις [sight] because, in their experience, from their very Dasein, ὄψις makes things in their unmediated presence accessible in their form and in their interrelation. For the Greeks, to have an unmediated stamp means to be.

The sense that makes *beings* accessible is ὄψις. Therefore, light and the sun must also be the enabling power for *seeing*. (This is taken as the starting point for constructing a higher seeing.)

To say it in Greek: sight or the eye must be ἡλιοειδής. Goethe says: sun-like.⁵ The eye must be defined by light. The act of seeing is *lit*. We also say, when something comes over us, when we grasp something in a really new and creative way: I see the light, I've had a flash of inspiration. What this points to is that we grasp seeing itself as standing under the power of light and the sun.

This seeing, ὄψις, ὄρα̃ν, is that mode of unmediated perception that is the most complete (πολυτελεστάτη αἴσθησις). It becomes the way to explain how we comprehend the essence of the idea.

For the idea as νοούμενον to be comprehensible, there must be a *yoke* here too, a *light*, as it were. This light must have a *light source*.

The light is what enables us to comprehend what *is*; it is Being, οὐσία, and at the same time, ἀλήθεια, openness. Plato, in a genuinely Greek fashion (in contrast to our conception today), says: truth is not something like the condition for the possibility of thinking and comprehension, but rather it is the condition for the possibility that *something comprehended* is given, the condition for *beings* themselves (openness corresponds to comprehensibility).

5. ["Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft, / Die Sonne könnt' es nie erblicken; / Läg' nicht in uns des Gottes eigne Kraft, / Wie könnt uns Göttliches entzücken?" J. W. von Goethe, *Goethes Werke*, vol. 1: *Gedichte und Epen*, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1996), p. 367. "If the eye were not sun-like it could not see the sun; if we did not carry within us the very power of the god, how could anything god-like delight us?" Translation by David Luke in Goethe, *Selected Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 282. Goethe's poem is based on Plotinus's *Enneads* 1.6.9, and indirectly reflects *Republic* 508b. Goethe published a slightly different version of the verses in the preface to his 1810 *Theory of Colors*: see *Werke*, vol. 1, p. 730.]

Just as the eye must obviously be ἡλιοειδής, so must the comprehension of the idea (νοεῖν) have a character that corresponds to what determines and enables *this yoke as yoke* (the ἀγαθόν). It must be ἀγαθοειδής [like the good]. As the eye is sun-like, so must the comprehension of the idea be ἀγαθοειδές.

b) The good as the higher empowering power
for Being and truth in their linked essence

This is only a preliminary explication of sensory seeing and the non-sensory comprehension of the idea. We perceive that what extends the span of the yoke, so to speak—light and Being and truth—is determined by something higher. “And so this, what grants unconcealment to the knowable beings and lends to the knower the capacity to know, is the idea of the good” (book VI, 508e1ff).

It should be noted that one and the same ground enables knowledge of the idea and the openness of the idea: the *good*—that although *Being* and *unconcealment* or *truth* do essentially *co-participate* in enabling essential knowledge, something still *higher* is given. “There is still something higher to esteem, beyond Being and truth, something that surpasses the power of these, and only by virtue of this, which surpasses truth, is knowledge really possible” (book VI, 509a3–4). Final passage (509a9–10): “But fix your eye once more, as we have been doing, on the image for the highest idea, namely, the sun! The sun may be plumbed still more deeply and more thoroughly to draw forth yet more correlations.”

A further characteristic of the sun as sensory image of the good is developed:

SOCRATES: In my opinion, you might say that the sun bestows upon the visible things not just the quality of being seen, but also their emergence, growth, and nourishment, while the sun itself is not becoming.

GLAUCON: How could it be!

SOCRATES: And so we must now also say that not only does being known {ἀλήθεια} belong to the knowable things on the basis of the good, but even this {namely, that these things are always something composed in this and that way; in short, Being}, and that therefore Being, too, belongs to them only on the basis of the good, while the good itself is not a type of Being, but is beyond Being and towers over it in power and worth. (Book VI, 509b2ff)

This, in the whole of the Platonic corpus, is surely where Plato expresses his decisive thought about the good.

The good is *beyond* Being, ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (book IV, 509b9), and therefore = nothing (to put it *formally*). This means that if we ask

about the good as we would ask about a good thing, then we will not find it, we will always run up against *the nothing*. The good can never be found at all among beings or Being. It requires that we ask in a different way.

The ἀγαθόν is not simply beyond Being; *in its beyondness*, it is precisely *related to Being and truth* (ἀλήθεια), namely, as that which *empowers* both of them as what they are. With respect to worth and δύναμις and power, the good is superior to everything else; the good is itself also power, the power of empowering. The good is the highest power, in that it empowers what is already the most powerful, raising it to the level of the ὄντως ὄν and the ἀληθινόν. The good is the most powerful, which deploys itself and stands fast before everything else and for everything else.

In the treatment of the essence of the good, what is at issue is not *content*, nor is it *values*; rather, what is at issue is a *how*, the *manner* of the deployment of power. It (the idea of the good) becomes perceptible not when I take it as a thing, but when I submit myself to the *power*, thereby orienting and opening up my comportment so that I adjust myself to the power and so that power as power addresses me. What is at issue here will never be grasped by “sound common sense.”

Exactly the same characterization is found at the close of the allegory of the cave (book VII, 517c3). Plato says: in the field of νοεῖν, of the really knowable, the good itself (αὐτόν) is mistress. And this mastery is explained in this way: it bestows, it gives. παρέρχειν is not simply to bestow; it is both a *bestowing* and a *holding*—giving (and letting go), and in giving, holding. In other words, *the good gives and it binds*.

With this we discover how the sun corresponds to the good. The good binds (a) ἀλήθεια, that which pertains to the *seen*, openness, together with (b) νοῦς, the capacity for conceiving and understanding, for the *understanding of Being*.

The good is the empowerment of Being and of unconcealment to their essences, which intrinsically belong together. (But this says nothing if it is only a definition and is not conceived on the basis of how we *hold* ourselves.)

In the image, the good is what emanates the *yoke* from itself, as it were, and yokes together Being and truth so that something is possible that fulfills itself among human beings in historically *free* human beings.

§28. The development of the essence of truth as history of humanity

a) Review: the inner order of the question of the essence of truth⁶

We are approaching the conclusion of an essential line of thought. So now we should once again lay out and follow the inner order of our inquiry.

6. [Recapitulation at the beginning of the session of 25 January 1934.]

We asked ourselves: what is *truth*? We had two answers: (1) truth as *unconcealment*, ἀλήθεια; (2) truth as *correctness*, *adaequatio*. Each has a particular relation to the other. To begin with externals: truth as unconcealment is the older, truth as correctness the more recent. Today “correctness” dominates exclusively.

We asked whether this initial conception (unconcealment) was there at the inception only chronologically, or whether this inception is at the same time meant substantively, in the sense of the *origin*, so that correctness arises from unconcealment, and arises in such a way that it gains a superior power and becomes exclusively dominant.

These are not questions of some “history of philosophy,” but questions of essence, questions whose *Being* is based on the moment of *our Dasein* itself. These two answers, correctness and unconcealment, do not merely offer a content, two definitions. They are only the law-like summations of two interpretations found in *Dasein*’s comportment among beings as a whole and toward itself. Why did the universally accepted definition become dominant?

These two conceptions are grounded in turn on *fundamental orientations*. The issue is not the difference between two definitions, but the opposition between two fundamental positions in the history of man. The question of truth does not hang in the air; it is *historical*. The issue is not the conceptual differences between various human epochs, but differences in the *innermost Being* of man.

These two differentiated concepts are in juxtaposition, even if the juxtaposition goes unspoken. We have tried to grasp this *juxtaposition of the two concepts of truth* in a passage where both determinations are found in an *originary* way, in Plato.

Plato answers the question, “What is truth?” by means of the allegory of the cave, in four stages. The third stage provides the culmination. Only the fourth presents and defines the authentic liberation; it is not, so to speak, a mere appendix.

In characterizing the third stage, we passed over the closer determination, the peak, as it were, of the whole happening, from which the whole can be surveyed—namely, the determination of the *highest idea of the good*.

We illuminated the highest idea of the good in two steps.

1. We attempted to discover what the highest idea might be with a free construction, as it were. The highest idea is what makes possible *Being* as well as *unconcealment*. The good, ἀγαθόν, is a word from everyday language that means nothing other than this: what *makes possible*, what *prevails* before everything else and *determines* it. ἀγαθόν never signifies a content, but a “how,” a distinctive mode of Being.

2. We tried to exhibit how Plato himself delimits the highest idea. He works with a presentation in sensory images. The sensory image of the highest idea is the sun, and in relation to the sun, the comprehension of the highest idea is sensory perception with the eyes.

By means of correlation we will now show how the *good* is like the sun in its own domain. This fundamental state of affairs is, as it were, the basis for showing how the ἀγαθόν, the good, in its domain—the idea—is like the sun, in order to clarify which question is the decisive one in determining the ἀγαθόν.

In the state of perceiving with the eyes, there stands on one side the act of seeing, on the other being seen. There is an inner connection between seeing and the visibility of things. Both require a δύναμις, a making-possible. This is the same for both. The bridge, as it were, is light. The eye must be sun-like, and so must the visible being.

To the sun-likeness of seeing—both that of the eye and that of the visible being—there corresponds the goodness of the idea and of the comprehension of the idea. Both must have arisen from a common origin in order for the bridge to be possible.

b) The good as the empowerment of
truth and Being in their belonging together

Now it is important for us to see what features of the highest idea Plato gains by characterizing it through sensory images. To put it in brief slogans, it becomes apparent from the passage in book VI that the highest idea, the ἀγαθόν, is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, beyond Being, over and above Being, towering over it; towering not in an indefinite sense or in a spatial sense (a higher stratum), but towering over Being in two quite definite respects: πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει (book VI, 509b9); (1) *age*, older origin and thus a higher *rank*; (2) *power*.

The good towers over Being in *rank* and in *power*. We should gather from this that in general the ἀγαθόν is seen only in these two respects, that it has rank and that it is powerful.

This is the first feature, from book VI. Book VII is immediately connected to it (allegory of the cave). The idea of the good here is κυρία παρασχομένη ἀλήθειαν καὶ νοῦν (book VII, 517c4). From this (κυρία [sovereign]) we see the good's *character of mastery*. Furthermore, it is παρασχομένη, *granting*; to grant something and to *bind* by the granting. The good, as the sovereign mistress, grants (1) *truth*, makes truth possible, and (2) *Being* or the understanding of Being, νοῦς.

The *idea of the good*, as *highest idea*, is what *towers above*, *grants mastery*, and *binds*. We can sum up this description—what towers above, grants, and binds—in the fundamental act of *empowering* (that which empow-

ers). This feature is nothing other than what we know as δύναμις, what *makes possible*.

The first conception was formal. The second conception pointed us to mastery, power, rank. We must leave it at that. If we ask what Plato understood by the idea of the good, we must stick to this fundamental characteristic, in order not to fall into the mistake that nearly everyone makes, the mistake of taking some individual thing for the good. *The good is empowerment.*

In interpreting Platonic philosophy, one has said rather often that Plato gave up the idea of the good in his late period. This way of thinking is typical of philosophy professors, who change their view every year and think that with this, they are developing.

What is essential in a philosophy is that it is the same from its inception to its end. It never occurred to Plato to give up his doctrine. This we can gather without further ado from the Seventh Letter. Here we encounter the undiminished dominance of the good.

What do we gather from this treatment of what the whole story offers in the way of a response to our question of what *truth* is? What do we gather from the characterization of the *highest idea* as regards the essence of truth?

1. The first result is that truth, ἀλήθεια, is itself nothing ultimate, but stands under a higher *empowerment*. In this there lies already the methodological indication that the illumination of the question of truth must get clear about the fundamental fact that truth is nothing ultimate.
2. The second result is the *fundamental context* within which something like truth belongs. We should not poke around in other concepts to find out what truth is; instead, we must be directed toward finding the space and horizon through which and in which truth is surpassed, is empowered in its essence, and is under a more powerful form.
3. This applies not only to truth and its essence, but also to *Being*. Being too is nothing ultimate, but over Being there still stands something else. The question is what.
4. The fourth result is that not only are both—truth and Being itself in general—subordinate to something higher from which they receive their origin, but both are also interconnected in this subordination. *Truth* as the openness of beings, *Being* as the possibility of grasping beings, both stand under a *yoke* (ζυγόν), inasmuch as the yoke extends over both and thus first makes possible their essential connection. The ἀγαθόν has the character of a yoke, it forms the span that joins the experience of the openness of things to the experience of their Being.

5. What we gather from the essence of the good—that it is what empowers truth and Being to their inner connection and to their own proper essence—this for its own part stands in an essential relationship to *man*, as that which liberates man and precisely thereby binds him, and in this *binding*, brings authentic *necessity* into human Dasein as the presupposition of *freedom*.
6. This fundamental relation of man to what authentically liberates him is his *liberation* itself, and at the same time his *history*. Human history is a history that Plato has presented through images, a story that tells us that liberation takes place as working one's way up into the unconcealment of things. This means that the transformation of the essence of man in his Dasein is not a change in man's external situation, but an *innermost change in the Being of man*.

c) Philosophy as παιδεία of humanity for
the innermost change in its Being.

The development of the essence of truth through human history

Plato himself has a very clear concept of this. He says after the presentation in book VII (521c5) that this whole story—what goes on with the people there and plays itself out in the course of the ascent, the happening of this whole transformation—is not, as it might seem to be, a mere turning of a potsherd in the hand, but a *leading of the essence of humanity around and out* (ψυχῆς περιαγωγῇ). The whole human essence is transfigured by being led out from a certain night-like day to a true day. Plato calls the Dasein in the cave a night-like day; it is not absolute darkness; even here, humanity stands in a certain openness.

This leading around and out (περιαγωγῇ) of humanity from one situation into the other is the ascent to what is, as such; we say of this happening that it is really *philosophizing*. The ascent to what is, as such, is really philosophizing. To sum up: the question of the essence of truth is thus the question of the first essential history and the essential transformation of man through and in philosophy.

With this, the question of the essence of truth, and truth itself, gain a fundamental place within the essential vocation of man—a fundamental place of which Plato also knew; he expressed it in *Phaedrus* (249b5): “For how could the soul (the essence of man) come into the figure of man if it had not seen what is unconcealed in things?”

Man as he is, insofar as he exists, is determined by the fact that he has already seen the unconcealed, as it were, and thus brings with him the luminous glimmer of the essence of things—and he is this way only insofar as he *develops* this glimmer. The question of the essence of truth is the dominant question for man.

This is said in the introduction of the story at the beginning of book VII (514a1ff.): Μετὰ ταῦτα . . . “After this, make yourself an image of our essence and understand this (direct your gaze) not in terms of just any features, but according to how its παιδεία is, as well as its ἀπαιδευσία.” This is an indication that in listening to the story, we should direct our gaze to our own nature, to our innermost essence and Being in regards to παιδεία and ἀπαιδευσία, and not only as regards both individually, but looking at both together.

In German we have no word to express what the Greeks mean here. παιδεία is usually translated as “education” [*Erziehung*] or “cultivation” [*Bildung*], or more recently (Jaeger) as “formation of Greek humanity.”⁷ But this is an academic notion; this is not what is at stake, it is humanistic. παιδεία means, to paraphrase: the *inner binding-fast of human Dasein on the basis of the steadfastness that holds fast to what fate demands*. In contrast, ἀπαιδευσία means failure, powerlessness, not standing fast.

In the later, post-Platonic period, however, the meaning did develop in the direction of cultivation and education.

In our context, this means that what is at stake in this story is precisely the *essence and Being of man*—in regards to how he is *in his ground*. This grounding, fundamental happening in which the *essence of truth develops through human history*—and in this history, man acquires this inner steadfastness—this fundamental happening is *philosophy*.

But one will not comprehend even this fundamental thought of Plato, that the fundamental happening of history is philosophy, if one moves within ordinary conceptions. So first it is necessary to muffle, so to speak, all the points of view from which one is used to talking about philosophy.

1. Philosophy is *not a cultural phenomenon*, some domain of so-called spiritual creation within which works are produced that posterity admires. One can take philosophy this way, but then one does not understand it.
2. *Nor* is philosophy an opportunity and form in which individual *personalities develop* their talents by developing philosophy, and put themselves on display through their work.
3. *Nor* is philosophy an *area of scholarship* where research is carried out as in *science* and where there might be progress. In philosophy there is no progress. It is not an area of teaching and learning that can be systematized.
4. *Nor* is philosophy a *worldview* in the sense of the conclusion and

7. {Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1933).} [English translation: *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939–1944).]

rounding out of a conception of things, a summation, as it were, of the individual results of the sciences and of human experience.

5. *Nor* is philosophy a particular form in which an individual human being, who perhaps is detached from traditional religion, creates a *standpoint* for himself.

Instead, *philosophy* is a *fundamental happening in the history of humanity itself* (not of some arbitrary human being), which has the character of a quite *distinctive questioning*, a questioning *in which and through which the essence of humanity transforms itself*. This fundamental happening is not up to the arbitrary choice of an age and a people, but is older than we are and extends beyond us. For us, the question is whether we comprehend this necessity or whether we believe that we can break away from it.

On 30 January 1933:^{8,9} Kolbenheyer¹⁰

Every age and every people has its cave, and the cave dwellers to go with it. So do we today. And the prime example of a contemporary cave dweller and of the gossipy entourage that goes along with him is the popular philosopher and cultural politician Kolbenheyer, who made an appearance here yesterday. Here I do not mean Kolbenheyer as a poet, whose *Paracelsus* we admire.¹¹

8. [Heidegger's notation on the cover page: "In the lecture course 30.I.34." On page 1 of the manuscript, next to the title, Heidegger wrote, "Kolbenheyer: In the lecture course on the day after the speech." On 29 January 1934, Kolbenheyer had given a speech in Freiburg on "The Value for Life and Effect on Life of Poetic Art in a People." The speech was written in 1932 and was delivered repeatedly in larger German cities during 1933; it was published in E. G. Kolbenheyer, *Gesammelte Werke* (Munich: Langen & Müller, 1941), vol. 8, pp. 63–86.]

9. [Wilhelm Hallwachs did not record Heidegger's remarks. His speech is reproduced here from his surviving handwritten notes and is printed in italics to distinguish it from the text of Wilhelm Hallwachs's transcript. [In the translators' judgment, this typographical device is not necessary for the English-language reader. The Hallwachs transcript resumes with section d, German p. 214.] Hallwachs mentions the speech in his transcript simply in the following form: "After a delay of nearly an hour, Heidegger appears and first delivers a speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the National Socialist revolution, in which he concludes by indicating the tasks of the university, which he sees in awakening the future and preparing for it spiritually. He then returns to his theme."]

10. [Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, born 1878 in Budapest as the son of a Carpathian German, died 1962 in Munich. In the Third Reich, Kolbenheyer was a widely read writer and spokesman for the National Socialist regime. Cultural functionary since 1933 in the Prussian Academy of Arts; joined the National Socialist party in 1940.]

11. [Kolbenheyer's trilogy of novels: *Die Kindheit des Paracelsus* (1917), *Das Gestirn des Paracelsus* (1921), *Das dritte Reich des Paracelsus* (1926). His further works include *Karlsbader Novellen 1786* (1935) and *Das gottgelobte Herz* (1938).]

He is bound to the shadows and takes these as the only definitive reality and world; that is, he thinks and speaks in the schema of a biology that he got to know more than thirty years ago—at a time when it was the fashion to fabricate biological world views (cf. Bölsche¹² and the Kosmos books).

Kolbenheyer does not see, he cannot and does not want to see:

1. that this biology of 1900 is based on the fundamental approach of Darwinism and that this Darwinian doctrine of life is not something absolute, not even something *biological*, but is historically and *spiritually* determined by the liberal conception of humanity and human society that was dominant in the English positivism of the nineteenth century.
2. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that his biology of plasma and cellular structure and organism has been fundamentally surpassed, and that today a completely new way of posing the problem of “life” is taking shape, an approach that is deeper in principle.—Destruction of the concept of the organism, which is only an offshoot of “idealism,” isolated subject, “I,” and biological subject. Fundamental constitution: relation to the environment, and this not a consequence of adaptation but, to the contrary, the condition of possibility for adaptation.
3. Kolbenheyer does not see and does not want to see that, even when the essential determination of life is more originary and appropriate than that of the nineteenth century, even then *life* (the way of Being of plant and animal) does *not* constitute *the dominant whole* of reality.
4. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that, even if bodily life is in a certain way the *supporting ground* of human Being and of the ethnic sequence of its generations, this still does not yet prove that the *supporting ground* also has to be the *determining ground*, or even that it can be.
5. Kolbenheyer does not see and cannot see that man as people is a *historical* entity, that to historical Being there belongs the decision for a particular *will to be* and *fate*—engagement of action, responsibility in endurance and persistence, courage, confidence, faith, the strength for sacrifice.

All these fundamental modes of conduct of historical man are possible only on the basis of *freedom*.

12. {Wilhelm Bölsche (1861–1939), writer on nationalities and nature.} [Several of Bölsche’s books were published by Kosmos, a “society of the friends of nature.”]

But it is not enough to recognize, perhaps, these manifestations of human Being (after all, they are hard to deny), merely in order then to distort them into biological functional *capacities*. One thereby *perverts* decision—engagement—freedom—the courage for sacrifice into a process that is encumbered *from the outside* and fit into the biological reality which has been presupposed as the only definitive reality, without seeing and grasping that in engaging oneself and enduring and sacrificing, a *way of Being that is different in principle* becomes powerful—different in principle from, say, the functioning of gastric juices and sexual cells and tending to the brood. One fails to grasp that this way of Being does not arise from bodily Being simply because it is bound to the body; that this Being does not, among other things, “also” play itself out in the bodily organism, but rather it is precisely *bodily engagement* and struggle that are dominated and gripped by authentically, historically responsible Being (nobility!). The Prussian nobility—merely grown like an apple on a tree, or grown from historical experience in the spiritual-political reality of the world of Frederick the Great?

In principle this way of thinking is no different from the psychoanalysis of Freud and his ilk. And in principle it is also no different from Marxism, which takes the spiritual as a function of the economic production process; whether I take the biological or something else instead of this is all the same for the decisive question regarding the way of Being of the historical people.

6. Due to the blindness of this biologism to the historical, existentiell, fundamental reality of man or of a people, Kolbenheyer is incapable of truly seeing and grasping today’s *historical-political German* reality; and this reality was not there at all in his speech—to the contrary: the revolution was falsified into a mere *organizational operation*.
7. What is on exhibit here is the typical attitude of a reactionary, nationalistic, and folkish bourgeois. According to this attitude, the “political” is an unspiritual, disagreeable sphere which one leaves to certain people who then, for example, make a revolution. The bourgeois then waits until this process is at an end before he gets his turn; *now* he is ready for the task of *belatedly providing* the revolution with *spirit*.

For this tactic, one naturally appeals to a saying of the Führer: the revolution is at an end, the evolution is beginning. Yes—but we don’t want to deal in counterfeit money. Evolution—certainly, but only where the revolution is at an end. But where the revolution has not yet come to an end but rather has not even begun—as in spiritual matters and, for example, in the educational system—how do things stand there?

We are grateful for the role that spiritual workers of this sort play in life, *for they are doing nothing but bringing to light a perhaps unintended justification of the most trite reactionary position.* The facts demonstrate it: *the weightiest objection* to the speech and the clearest sign of how questionable it is, is the deafening applause that I do not begrudge Herr Kolbenheyer.

8. Whoever has experienced and grasped even the slightest part of the new German reality that stands before us must already know after Kolbenheyer's first sentences how things stand with his attitude. He takes "vocation" as a purely *economic* phenomenon, which it has become in the bourgeois age. He does not see that it is precisely vocation that is being experienced and grasped anew in its essence from the ground up (not on the basis of so-called spirit), namely, in its fundamental political character and on the basis of the essence of *labor*.
9. Kolbenheyer is a folkish kind of man, a nationalist; he talks of estates and rejects the delusion of class—and yet he does not stand in the new political reality, but somewhere above it. Instead, he thinks and speaks within a spiritual world that was modern thirty years ago among intellectuals; he takes this world for the only true one and takes himself to be authorized to impart the impeccable answer without delay to every question set before him—like the advice columnist in a newspaper.
10. All honor and admiration to Kolbenheyer the poet, but yesterday's speech was a political, and that means a spiritual fiasco that could not have been conducted more perfectly.

If the poet Kolbenheyer had told us how art grows in a transformed way from the new reality and by shaping it in advance, builds a world, then—yes; but what we have here is just a bad popular philosophy.

The man of the cave sits in his dwelling and knows nothing of the history of the violent liberation and highest obligation. He measures everything with his standards and believes: in 1933, the revolution; in '34 and after, spirit as a supplement.

Evolution—certainly! Development, solidification, and radically questioning obligation = clarification of the revolutionary reality.—But not: revolution as something over and done with, and afterwards the development of what the so-called spiritual people believe about it. That is completely superfluous. But what remains decisive is helping to shape the *historical-political reality* so radically in all domains of Dasein that the *new necessities of Being* come to have effect and take shape without falsification.

d) On the proper approach to the
question of the human essence

Quite schematically, we can say that we are asking about *man*. This is the guiding question that we must pose in all our reflections, the question of *historical* man. In asking this question, we must ask in the correct way. This—asking in the correct way—is the task of the philosophy of the future. This asking *is* the fundamental happening, *philosophizing*.

Now, if we ask about man, we see that this question has, up to now, always been posed in the form: *what* is man? In this *form of the question* there already lies a quite definite *advance decision*. For in this, it has already been decided that man is *something* constituted in such and such a way, to which this and that component belongs. One takes man as an entity that is put together out of body, soul, and spirit. Each of these components can then be considered individually in definite forms of questioning. Biology asks about the body of man, plants, and animals; psychology asks about the soul; ethics asks about the human spirit. Everything can be summed up in an anthropology.

All these disciplines have accumulated a tremendous amount of information about man. Nevertheless, they are not in a position to answer the question of man, because they *do not even ask this question anymore*.

The authentic revolution in the question must be that the question as a *question* must already be posed in a different way. We do not ask, “*What* is man?” but “*Who* is man?”

With this question, we establish a *direction of questioning* that is different in principle. With this, it is posited that man is a *self*, a being that is not indifferent to its own mode and possibility of Being; instead, its *Being is that which is an issue* for this being *in its own Being*.

Man is a self, and not a living thing with some spiritual endowments, but a being that in advance *decides about its own Being*, in this or that way. This is a quite different fundamental position, based on man’s possibility and necessity of Being.

Only because man is a *self* can he be an *I* and a *you* and a *we*. Being a self is not a consequence of being an I. This self-character of man is at the same time the ground for the fact that he has his *history*.

I say that the question of man must be *revolutionized*. *Historicity* is a fundamental moment of his Being. This demands a completely new relationship of man to his history and to the question of his Being.

Terminologically, I have designated this distinctive characteristic of man with the word “care”—not as the anxious fussing of some neurotic, but this *fundamentally human way of Being*, on the basis of which there are such things as resoluteness, readiness for service, struggle,

mastery, action as an essential possibility. Only as long as man decides for or against his distinctiveness . . .¹³ There is mastery only where there is also readiness for service.

On the basis of this question concerning the essence of man, his *Being* is revolutionized, the way he stands in relation to his historical tradition and historical mission is revolutionized.

13. {Gap in Hallwachs's transcript.}